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# **Tribal Economy In Central India**

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**FIRMA K. L. MUKHOPADHYAY**  
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## **FOREWORD**

Dr. Ranvir Saxena had chosen "Tribal Economy" as his subject for submission of his thesis for Ph. D. degree of the Agra University. The thesis was approved and Dr. Saxena was awarded the Ph. D. degree. He is now publishing the results of his labour in a book form.

As is well known, the tribals in India, more particularly in Madhya Pradesh, constitute a very big proportion of the total population. Since independence and with the coming into force of the Constitution and the declaration of Fundamental Rights, the problem of tribals has assumed great importance. From a Government mainly concerned with maintenance of law and order, the Government of independent India has now become the custodian of the well being of all people. It is therefore natural that the tribal problem should assume importance and more particularly the problem of improving their economic condition.

Dr. Ranvir Saxena's book is the result of a careful study of tribal economy in Central India. The book contains vast information, neatly collected and placed before the public under separate heads. I commend this book to all those who are interested in the problem of Tribes in India, particularly Central India.

Raj Bhavan,  
Bhopal.

H. V. Pataskar  
Governor of Madhya Pradesh



## PREFACE

In the underdeveloped countries no section of population is more underdeveloped than the tribal communities. These communities shall ultimately be the proving ground of the success or otherwise of the developmental efforts being made to improve the standard of living of the millions hovering on the brink of destitution.

In India we have a sizeable tribal population, numbering nearly 29 millions, forming nearly 7 per cent of the total population. These non-literate communities, occupying the most infertile and unresponsive lands, live under the shadow of persistent famines and endemic scarcities. Centuries of persecution and exploitation by the powerful communities has spelt for them economic disaster and social degeneration. The tribal communities in India are a great national problem, a challenge and an opportunity to the principles of democracy and social equity that the country has pledged itself to uphold.

There is unfortunately a deplorable lack of competent studies of the rural economy of the tribal countryside. Anthropologists have studied them, sociologists and folklorists have approached them now and then, but rarely the economists. Lack of quantitative economic information about the tribes hinders proper diagnosis, dependable prognosis and trustworthy remedial measures. It should be remembered that the tribal communities are fundamentally dissimilar to the so-called civilized communities—their socio-economic institutions, their value judgements, their psychological responses are basically different. Generalizations made from the observations of neighbouring non-tribal communities have little validity in the closed tribal societies. For valid generalizations about tribal communities the proper field of study is the tribal community itself. The present study undertaken by me is a very humble effort in this direction.

I have selected for my study that region of western Central India which forms a part of the great central tribal zone running along the Vindhyan and the Satpura mountains. It covers five tribes, the Bhils, the Bhilalas, the Saharias, the Gonds and the Korkus, inhabiting the former state of Mañhya Bharat. This tribal population numbering more than a million lies scattered over a large area. The Bhils and the Bhilalas inhabit the south-west and form a compact block, outnumbering the no. tribals. The Saharias live in the extreme north-west separated by the Bhil-Bhilala belt by several hundred miles, outnumbered by the non-tribal population. Then there come the Gonds and the Korkus, a mere outcrop of the larger ethnic groups across the Narmada.

Because of the scattered nature of the tribes and the large size of population under study I have largely confined myself to the micro-economic aspect of the problem. Wherever necessary and feasible the micro-economic approach was also adopted.

For the communities where there are no competent economic studies to go by, and no statistical data to assist the investigation, Raymond Firth has suggested the importance of "*the observational technique*". He suggests that, "some kind of fusion between the theoretical apparatus of the economist and the field techniques of the anthropologist seem called for, as one type of attack on the problems." Taking my cue from Raymond Firth I have attempted a mixed technique in this study. I have used old records, census reports and other authentic documents to reconstruct the economic history of the tribes. To information thus gleaned has been added the statistical information collected through randomized sample survey comprising of 500 households (Bhils 150, Bhilalas 150, Saharias 100, Gonds 50 and Korkus 50) spread over 65 villages. This has further been supplemented with observations made during the course of intensive field work spread over several years, from 1953 to 1956.

This brings me to the question of the "dating" of this study in view of an interval of seven years between the writing of this book and its publication. In a sense every socio-economic study gets "dated" by the time it is completed. But sometimes this is largely a quantitative phenomenon barely touching the qualitative picture. It is my considered view that, by and large, little has happened in the tribal areas in the last few years to change the qualitative picture reflected in this study.

The study reveals a fundamental fact. The compact groups have responded differently to the exposure to advanced cultures and competitive economic forces as compared with the scattered groups. This is nowhere evident more clearly than in the demographic patterns, compact groups showing high rate of increase whereas the scattered groups showing a much slower rate.

Caste character of occupations in the Hindu Society emerges as a great handicap preventing occupational mobility in the tribes and the growth of diversification of handicrafts.

The tribal agriculture, a one-crop-kharif economy, presents itself as the lowest type of sub-subsistence farming. Practised on the poorest of the rocky soils with little depth, no irrigation and very scanty rainfall, the peculiar pattern of crops and the low yields, the agriculture of the tribal areas is a deficit agriculture. Famines and scarcities become common features sapping energy and breaking the morale of the people. Colossal waste of resources, natural and human, is yet another characteristic of the rural economy of the tribal countryside.

It is hightime these aspects of the tribal economy are studied by the administrators, social reformers and the planners so that their plans and schemes for the development of these areas are rooted in reality.

I owe deep debts of gratitude to many people who have helped me directly and indirectly in the prepara-

tion of this book. To the authors of various books, reports and gazetteers, who have been acknowledged at relevant places, I am deeply indebted. I doubt if I would have been able to make much headway in my work without the generous co-operation I received from the various departments of the Madhya Bharat Government, particularly the departments of Tribal Welfare, Labour, Industries, Forests and the Land Revenue. They not only assisted me in collecting information but also permitted me to use the data collected by them.

I am thankful to the Institute of Plant Industry, Indore, for their assistance in the processing of the statistical data.

I am indebted to Shri Labhchandji Chajjani for his almost paternal guidance and help at all stages of this work.

Shri T. M. Jain, the then Chief Minister of M.B., and Shri M. S. Mehta, the then Education Minister, helped me in various ways. To them I would like to express my sincere thanks.

To Prof. R. K. Yarday, Head of the Department of Economics, Holkar College, (now the Government Arts and Commerce College) Indore, I am particularly indebted for his guidance as supervisor and encouragement in many other ways.

I am much indebted to Shri H. V. Pataskar, the Governor of Madhya Pradesh, for his kindness in contributing a Foreword to the book, and to Dr. K. N. Katju, the former Chief Minister of M.P., for the trouble he took in writing a very illuminating Introduction.

Indore.

26th January

Ranvir Saxena

## INTRODUCTION

Our ancient inhabitants of India, the *adivasis* of the land, the so called Scheduled Tribes of the Indian Constitution, are entitled to our highest respect and consideration.

They are genuine Indians in every sense of the word, and are the one people who have held their personal freedom and liberty above all material comforts and amenities in the world. They have scorned a life of subjection to outsiders, and have preferred a life of the greatest hardship and struggle in the wilderness to a life of ease and material prosperity under foreign rule. Their life in the jungle as hunters and wood-cutters has not only deprived them of proper food and clothing and other usual amenities of life, it has also deprived them so far, of all education and intellectual environment and advancement, and for thousands of years—in the past they have lived a life of illiteracy without any public health conveniences and safeguards. They have continued to live a primitive life as if the world was standing still during countless centuries. All this they have suffered willingly and voluntarily for their love of freedom and self-rule and hatred of subjugation to others. Now that India has gained freedom and independence, and for the first time in our national history, Praja-tantra (a Republic) has been established. These *adivasis* are now citizens of a free India, and are an important sector of a free nation and people ruling over themselves. These people, these *adivasis*, should, willingly and even proudly now come into the plains and mix with the other people of the land, their co-citizens of India, and take the most active steps to remove their backwardness, and equip and qualify themselves by necessary and proper education to take their due share in our democratic form of administration in all its spheres—legislative, executive and judicial. Their past traditions are noble and magnificent, and would make them worthy and patriotic sons of the Bharat Mata.

• Dr. Ranvir Saxena has given in this book an illuminating account and survey of the adivasis, over a million in number, who are inhabitants of old Madhya Bharat. He describes fully and in detail their social and family customs and way of life, their occupations and sources of livelihood. Many of them still live an unsettled wandering life with shifting cultivation. Large number of adivasis live in other States. But Dr. Saxena's book may well be treated as a sample book descriptive of adivasis throughout India. This book fills a great need, and should prove of special importance, significance and use to Governments and all official agencies and social workers engaged in work among the adivasis. The information supplied by the book is accurate, precise and covers the whole field of adivasi life.

The information collected should be fully utilised for formulating and implementing urgently all practicable measures for the improvement and advancement of the adivasis in every sphere of national life. Ashrams should be established extensively for the free education of adivasi children with all facilities for their food, clothing and accomodation. The adult members of the community should be provided, wherever necessary, with agricultural land. They should be given the necessary aid for carrying on cottage industries and dairy farming, and settling down in properly planned and organized colonies. I am confident that all this state aid and encouragement will pay the greatest dividends, and our adivasi brethren, with all their ancient devotion to self-rule and self-government will prove themselves able and worthy citizens equal to all demands made upon them at any time for defence and service of the country and prove fully qualified to take their due share in the administration of the country from the highest level downwards.

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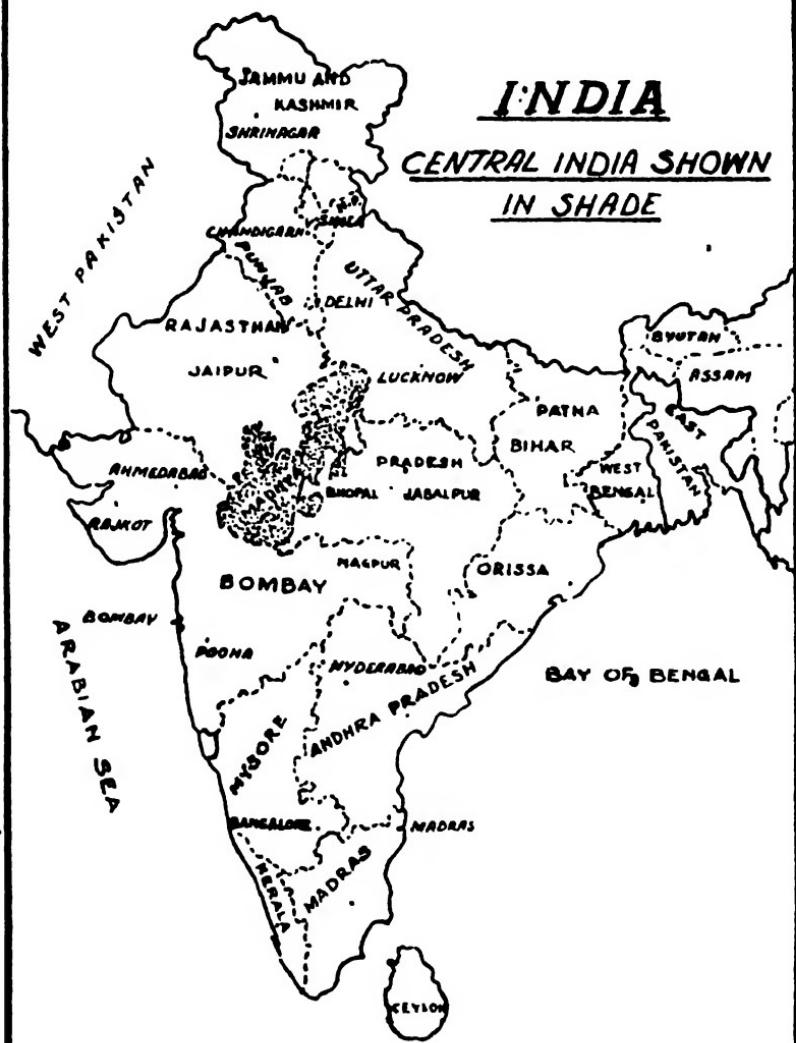
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INDIA

CENTRAL INDIA SHOWN  
IN SHADE





## CHAPTER I PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

### *Geographic Background :*

Few regions in India have undergone so many changes in their boundaries and nomenclature as this part of the peninsular India known widely as Central India. In the ancient times this region was referred to as the 'Madhya-desa'. Then, for long, Central India was synonymous with Malwa. But even during this period the term Malwa was not precise. At different periods of its turbulent history, it meant different territories. The political boundaries of Madhya-desa or Malwa have always been at the mercy of the whims of the Rulers at Delhi whose designation of the boundaries has, generally been arbitrary and mainly political rather than cultural and geographical.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Mohammedans had included in Malwa many regions which strictly speaking did not form a part of it. "Thus it appears, that besides Malwa proper, the dependent but separate countries of Harrowtee on the north-east of Nimar to the south, and the hilly tracts of Rath, Bagur, Kantul, and part of Mewar to the west and north-west were included in Malwa".<sup>2</sup>

This anarchy of definition was never remedied despite the best efforts of Malcolm and others who restricted the use of the term Malwa to designate only the table-land. And Malwa continued to be the label applied to the Central India. It was only in 1854, when the Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand districts were added to Malwa to form a Central India Agency, the term Central India was extended to the whole of the Agency.<sup>3</sup> But even under the British, when the Central India consisted of a medley of feudal states, and the British established an agency, to exercise control over these parts, sometimes one state was excised from the agency and sometimes another was added to it. The same fluidity of territories and anarchy of names continues to be its characteristic feature even in new India, where it has already undergone several revolutionary changes within a dozen years.

The first of these changes in free India took place on the 28th of May, 1948 when a number of princely states

and estates of what was then known as the Central India Agency were integrated to form the United State of Gwalior, Indore and Malwa (Madhya Bharat).<sup>4</sup> This state of Madhya Bharat, literally Central India, existed on the political map of India for a brief spell of eight years and five months. The present study of the economy of the tribal people was made during the brief existence of the state of Madhya Bharat or Central India, and all references hereafter are to the Madhya Bharat or Central India as it existed before its merger in the reorganised state of Madhya Pradesh.<sup>5</sup> For reasons of convenience it has been thought necessary to continue these references in the present tense. It is noteworthy that more or less, the boundaries of the Madhya Bharat have been kept intact in the new Madhya Pradesh, and the areas comprising the Madhya Bharat are referred to as the Madhya Bharat region. The Madhya Bharat region consists of the Indore and Gwalior commissionaries of the new Madhya Pradesh with almost the same areas as were a part of the Madhya Bharat state. The Madhya Bharat region, geographically speaking, forms the western sector of the Madhya Pradesh and may conveniently be referred to as the western Central India.

#### *Area and Location of Madhya Bharat :*

Madhya Bharat is situated in the Centre of the Indian Peninsula between latitudes 20.40° and 26.50° North and longitudes 74.10° and 78.40° East. On the North and North-East it is bounded by the river Chambal which demarcates it from the States of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh; on the East and South-East it touches the States of Vindhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bhopal and Madhya Pradesh; on the South and South-West lie the Khandesh, Rewakantha and the Panchmahal districts of the Bombay State; in the West it once again has common borders with the State of Rajasthan.

The State has an area of 46,478 square miles and a population of 79,54,154 according to the 1951 Census. Out of this total population of the State the Tribal population amounts to 10,60,812 or roughly 13 per cent.

### *Hill System :*

Madhya Bharat is more or less a mountainous high-land. The most important mountain range is that of the Vindhya which runs through the State like a spinal column. Strictly speaking there is no other mountain range in the area. Commencing in Gujrat it crosses the State sweeping through parts of districts of Ratlam, Jhabua, Dhar, parts of districts of Nimar and continuing through parts of district Dewas it runs into the Madhya Pradesh and Bhopal. Again it enters the Northern parts of the State striking north and south except in the extreme Northern parts where the direction gradually changes to north-east and runs parallel to the river Chambal. The river Narmada forms the southern boundary of the Vindhya and divides it from the Satpura range which runs parallel to the Vindhya, over a long distance.

The hill system rises as high as 3,000 feet above sea level and exercises a marked effect on the climate of the State both from the high table-land it forms and from the direction it gives to the prevailing winds at different times. At the same time it forms the water-shed of the State. All the rivers of the state rise in these hills and following the general slope from south to north, pursue a northern course and join the Gangetic water system.

### *Vindhya :*

Vindhya have influenced the life and trends of the region, not only through its effects on climate and cultivation, but also through its impregnability. As such, they have played an important role in the ethnical and cultural history of the region. Panikkar has spoken of this region as an 'area of refuge' where the indigenous tribes took shelter when pressed by Northern invaders.<sup>6</sup>

As a barrier par excellence, the Vindhya have had a great usefulness to the aboriginal people throughout the course of Indian history and enabled them to defy the superior powers of the Indo-Gangetic plains.<sup>7</sup> Venkatachar has dealt at length with the role of the Vindhya as a cradle of tribal civilization through times immemorial.<sup>8</sup>

Even today there is an ethnic belt running across the State, closely following the Vindhyan hills. Small patches of tribal areas are dotted all along the length of the Vindhyas and the parts immediately adjoining the hill systems.<sup>9</sup>

The Vindhya system prevented immigration to the Central India from the South. All tides of migrations that reached Central India were from the Gangetic North, Rajputana and Gujerat. The only incursion that successfully penetrated these impregnable ramparts of nature was that of the Marathas from the Deccan in the eighteenth Century.<sup>10</sup> This incursion had very disastrous results for the tribal people. This was, for them, perhaps the most brutal of all the invasions. And it forced upon them, for a long time to come, a life of lawlessness and free-booting. But for the Vindhyan fastnesses, they would hardly have survived this onslaught.

### *Rivers :*

The important rivers north of the Vindhya range are the Chambal and its tributaries, the greater Kali Sindh and Sipra, the Parvati, the Betwa with its affluents the eastern Parbati, Pahuj and Kunwari.

These rivers become roaring torrents during the rains and carry away with them a vast amount of valuable silt, denuding the already poor soil of the hills. In the winter they calm down into passive and crystal clear streams. But when summer sets in, all their affluence is gone and they become mere brooks, threading their way laboriously through the middle of a wide channel. Sometimes they dry up completely. This marked seasonal variability, coupled with the steepness of the banks, renders them of very little use for irrigation. Navigation, under the circumstances, is an utter impossibility.

South of the Vindhya range Narmada is the largest and by far the most important river. It rises from the Amar Kantaka in the Maikal range of the Vindhya hills and flows through the hill division of the state in a south-westerly direction providing the Nimar district of the State with a valley famous for its fertility. Narmada, too, despite its

size, is a hilly river, useless for irrigation because of the great declivity of its bed and the high and rocky banks.<sup>11</sup>

• Of the Vindhyan rivers, Chambal is the largest and the most useful. It rises near Indore and flows down the northern slopes of the Vindhyan range. It strikes a northward course and passing through the districts of Ujjain and Ratlam enters the district of Mandsaur where it runs through a deep cavern. Near Bhānpura where it leaves the state to enter Rajasthan, the Gandhi Sagar Dam is being built to harness the river.<sup>12</sup> After obliging Rajasthan for a while it returns to the State in Sheopur; and skirting the districts of Morena and Bhind enters the Uttar Pradesh and empties itself in Jamuna near Etawah.

Mahi is yet another river of note, particularly for the tribal areas of the south. It rises near Amjhera in the tehsil Sardarpur of the district Dhar, and running through deep ravines and dense forests of Dhar, Jhabua and Sailana enters Rajasthan and thence Gujarat, and empties itself in the Arabian Sea.

Mahi is not important from the point of view of irrigation as its bed lies much below the level of land on either side of its banks. But in the legend and folklore of the Bhils it finds an affectionate place. The Bhils regard it as their mother. In olden days when Bhils were turbulent and lawless the Mahi area was regarded as frightful and fierce. It gave rise to terms like 'Mehwas', meaning a 'hill stronghold' and *Mehwasi*, a 'turbulant or thieving person'.<sup>13</sup>

• Besides these important rivers there are numerous small rivers and streams running haphazardly through the mountainous areas.

### *Scenery :*

Madhya Bharat presents an infinite variety of scenery. "Mountains clothed with deep forests, and low rocky hills overgrown with thorny jungle skirt the vast and fertile plains of the plateau. Rivers swimming softly through the millet and sugar-cane, sweeping round pleasant hamlets and crossing vast pasture lands leave plateau to thunder in clouds of spray down rocky precipices."<sup>14</sup>

Malcolm has given a very beautiful description of the scenic beauty of Malwa. Says he, "Malwa is a table-land, in general open and highly cultivated, varied with small, conical and table-crowned hills and low ridges watered by numerous rivers and small streams and favoured with a rich productive soil, and a mild climate alike conducive to the health of man, and the liberal supply of his wants and luxuries."<sup>15</sup>

In summer the whole scene undergoes a change. After the Rabi is harvested the rolling plains present a picture of cracking black soil and brown grass.

The hilly areas of Nimar and Jhabua present a very different scene. These areas are full of mountains, forests, rivers and valleys with small level patches scattered here and there. During the rains these areas present a beautiful picture. But the summer turns the whole scene into frightful one, with the naked hills of the Satpuras without a speck of green over them. The valleys and fields are equally lifeless and desolate with parched-up land and bare and stunted trees.

#### *Natural Divisions :*

According to physical features, climate, soils, dialects and the people, the Madhya Bharat can be divided into three well defined and uniform parts. The natural divisions are :

- (i) The Lowland
- (ii) The Plateau, and
- (iii) The Hills.

During all the Census operations, starting from 1901 down to the 1951, the same classification has been maintained throughout.

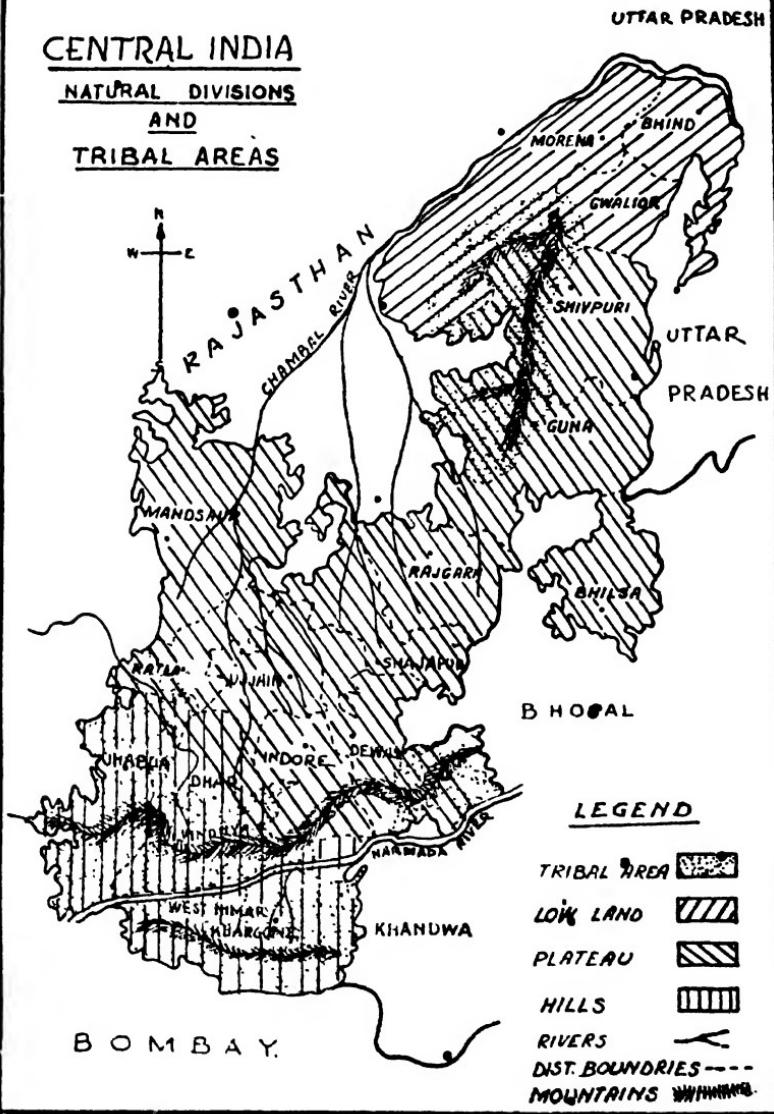
The Tribes of Madhya Bharat are spread in all the three divisions. The Saharias are scattered in the lowland division and parts of the plateau; the Gond and the Korkus have a sprinkling in the plateau; and the Bhils and the Bhilalas preponderate in the Hill division.

#### *The Lowland :*

The Lowland is largely occupied by the Vindhyan

## PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

### CENTRAL INDIA NATURAL DIVISIONS AND TRIBAL AREAS





series. The division comprises of the districts of Bhind, Gwalior and Morena. Of these, only the district Morena contains tribal population.

The area of the division is 8,161 square miles and the population 16,91,858 (1951). It comprises of plain country of elevation varying from 500 to 900 feet above the sea level. The soil is of moderate fertility, the prevailing types being the Bhangar alluvial and fine sandy. The annual rainfall varies between 25 inches to 30 inches in different parts, the rainiest months being June to September. More than half of this is received during the months of July and August. But the rainfall varies from year to year and causes agricultural uncertainties.

The cold season extends from December to February. Some rain from North-East Monsoon is received during December and January which is useful for the Rabi crops.

The summers in this division are very severe.

### *The Plateau :*

The Plateau is a wide table-land commonly known as Malwa. This division begins nearly eighty miles south of Gwalior and keeps on rising in the form of terraces and attains a wide plain, the mean elevation of which is 1,600 feet above sea-level.

The Plateau division covers an area of 27,466 square miles and a population of 46,15,661 (1951). It comprises the districts of Shivpuri, Guna, Bhilsa<sup>16</sup>, Rajgarh, Shajapur, Ujjain, Indore, Dewas, Mandsaur and Ratlam.

The average rainfall varies from 28 inches at Kolaras in the Shivpuri district to 56 inches at Bhilsa. The climate is equable and salubrious.

The northern regions of the Shivpuri and Guna districts are interspersed with hills and ravines and dense forests. The soils are inferior and less fertile. These areas have a large Saharia population. Likewise, on the hilly parts of the Dewas district live the Gonds and the Korkus.

### *The Hills :*

This division lies mainly along the Vindhyan and the

Satpura ranges and their numerous offshoots. It is mostly a medley of hills and ravines, covered for the most part with thick jungle. The areas are mostly roadless and inaccessible for most part of the year. River Narmada waters a part of this division, and a thin strip of land on the either side of the river is of high fertility famed for its high yields of cotton. The division comprises of the districts of Jhabua (commonly known as Rath),<sup>17</sup> Dhar and Nimar. The area of the region is 10,851 square miles and the population 16,46,635. The inhabitants are mostly Tribal (Bhils and Bhilalas).

In this region the monsoon sets in rather early, in the last week of May. Most of the rain is received during the months of June and July. The mean annual rainfall varies from 23 inches at Barwani to 30 inches at Dharampuri.

January is the coldest month of the year. The summer sets in by the beginning of April making May the hottest month of the year. The climate, in general, is extremely dry and hot.

## CHAPTER II

### ETHNOLOGY OF THE TRIBES

#### *Tribal Zones :*

The tribal population of India is generally divided into three Zones according to their distribution, namely the North-Eastern Zone, the Central Zone, and the Southern Zone.<sup>1</sup> The North-Eastern Zone consists of the Himalayan region and the hill and mountain ranges of North-Eastern India. The Southern Zone consists of that part of the peninsular India which falls South of the river Krishna. The Central Zone occupies the central belt of the older hills and plateaus along the dividing line between peninsular India and the Indo-Gangetic Plains. The main tribes inhabiting this zone are the Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Bhumij, Kharia, Birhar, Bhuiyan, Juang, Kandh, Savara, Gond, Baiga, Bhil, Koli, Korku etc.

#### *Scheduled Tribes in Madhya Bharat :*

The State of Madhya Bharat falls in this Central Zone. There are five tribes in Madhya Bharat: The Bhils, the Bhilalas (including other sub-tribes), the Saharias, the Korkus and the Gonds.

The constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 recognised the above five tribes as the only scheduled tribes of the State.

#### *Scheduled Areas :*

Eleven of the Covenanting States of Madhya Bharat had sizable tribal populations. These states, or parts thereof, were brought together to form the Scheduled Areas, mentioned in the Schedule II of the Covenant.<sup>2</sup>

More or less the same areas were declared by the President of India, as the Scheduled Areas of the State by the Scheduled Areas (Part B States) Order, 1950.<sup>3</sup> The Scheduled Areas are :

- (a) Revenue district of Jhabua (whole). (All the five tehsils of Jhabua, Alirajpur, Petlawad, Thandla and Jobat).
- (b) Tehsils Sendhwa, Barwani, Rajpur, Khargone, Bhikangaon and Maheshwar of the Revenue

- district of Nimar.<sup>4</sup>
- (c) Tehsils Sardarpur, Kukshi, Dhar and Manawar of the Revenue district of Dhar.
- (d) Tehsil Sailana in the Revenue district of Ratlam.

The scheduled area extends to the sixteen tehsils in the south of the State and covers an area of 10,011 square miles. Except the tehsil of Sailana in the district of Ratlam the rest of the area falls in the Hill division. Even Sailana tehsil, which does not fall in the Hill division, is geographically very akin to the hilly region of the rest of the scheduled areas. The chief features of the scheduled areas are the hilly terrain, dense forests, poor soils and lack of irrigation facilities. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950,<sup>5</sup> recognised the Bhils and Bhilalas (inclusive of sub-tribes) as Scheduled Tribes *only within the confines of the Scheduled Areas*. Bhils and Bhilalas, outside the Scheduled Areas were not treated as Scheduled Tribes. On the other hand the Saharia, Gond and Korku were treated as Scheduled Tribes throughout the State.

The Scheduled Areas account for nearly 86 per cent of the tribal population of the State. This 86 per cent of population lives in contiguous areas in the Scheduled Areas. This concentration of the tribal population has imparted a characteristic culture to these areas. The economy, the language, the customs, the manners—all the aspects of the social life of the areas bear a strong imprint of the aboriginal culture.

#### *The Tribes of Madhya Bharat :*

Anthropologically the tribes of Madhya Bharat can be classified in two main classes : The Munda and the Gond.<sup>6</sup>

The Munda class is further subdivided into three subclasses. The Bhil, Savara and the Korku. The Bhil group includes the Bhilala and other allied sub-tribes such as Mankar, Barela and Rathia. The Gond class consists only of the Gonds.

#### *Geographical Distribution of the Tribes :*

Reference was made earlier to the characteristic geo-

graphical distribution of these tribes in the State. Except the Gonds and Korkus who inhabit the same regions of Nemawar in the district Dewas on the Plateau, rest of the tribes are found in different well defined regions. The Saharias inhabit the district Morena of the Lowlands, and the districts Guna, Shivpuri and Bhilsa of the Plateau. Looked purely from a geographical angle the Saharias live in a compact and contiguous hilly tract covering the districts of Morena, Guna and Shivpuri. The Bhils and the Bhilalas, almost exclusively, live in the Hill division of the south.

But whether in the Lowlands, the Plateau or the Hill division, their inhabitation is invariably a spur of the Vindhya or the Satpuras, and the regions adjoining them. Gonds and Korkus, although living on the Plateau, do not have the rolling plains as their habitation. Centuries of oppression have driven them to the hills where they eke out a miserable and marginal existence on the mercy of nature. The same holds true of the Saharias on the Plateau as well as the Lowland. Be it a Bhil or Bhilala, a Saharia or a Gond or a Korku; be it the north, the centre or the south of the State the tribal setting is the same. Their hearths and homes are set in the wildest forests and the hardest hills. The Vindhyan hills run like a common cord through the lives of the tribal people giving them a common physical environment. And, physical environment plays a very important part in the determination of the material and moral culture of the people which we term as history. Gordon East aptly remarks, "It is often said, history is all Geography, for we know that at a primitive stage of culture and for a countless millenia, folk lived on the sufferance of an omnipotent nature which they were powerless either to modify or to exploit". And nature and habitat have continued to exercise on the life of the tribals an influence which is the main determinant of their present status. Under the poorest resources available they have not done very badly. They have kept their material needs to the minimum and exploited the natural resources, with the skill and tools they have, to their best.

*The Bhils :*<sup>8</sup>

The Bhils are the third most numerous tribe of India after Gonds and Santhals. The total Bhil population of the country was 23 lakhs in 1941. In the tribal population of Madhya Bharat they constitute the largest element. And they are also the most familiar, as a consequence, no doubt, of their long and close contact with the Hindus.

*History :*

The origin of the word 'Bhil' is still clothed with uncertainty and the various explanations put forward to unravel the mystery of the appellation are well within the realm of conjecture. It is commonly believed that "the word Bhil is derived from a Dravidian word for a bow which is the characteristic weapon of the tribe".<sup>9</sup>

Venkatachar mentions that the ancient Tamil poets termed certain savages of the pre-Dravidian blood as *Villavr* (Bowman), and he suggests that possibly the modern Bhils are the tribe designated by the later term".<sup>10</sup> According to this school of thought Bhil is not a tribe name at all. Venkatachar is of the opinion that Bhils are a pre-Dravidian race, probably Proto-Mediterranean, who spread "far and wide when a climatic crisis occurred in the grass steppes of Sahara, and it is this race which is responsible for the industry associated with Final Capsian culture in the Vindhya's".<sup>11</sup> The Bhils are held to have occupied the Aravali hills and the Western Vindhya's between the Banas and Mahi rivers. The Dravidians, a Mediterranean race, entered India through south-west and moved towards the south, "And it would be reasonable to suppose that Gujarat was on the way of the immigrant Dravidians in their march towards the Deccan and the South".<sup>12</sup> It must have been here that the first contact and clash of cultures took place and earned the Bhils their present name.

It is commonly held that the Bhils are identical with the pygmies mentioned by Ktesias (400 B.C.) and the Phyllitae of Ptolemy (A.D. 150).<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the word *Nishad* which occurs in the *Samhitas* and the *Brahmans*, is held to mean Bhilla or Bhil. But Nishad meant one

who sat low ( निं०+षाद् ) and as such it could not be taken to mean any specific tribe. It is rightly held to be a generic name applied to non-Aryans who had accepted low positions in the Vedic Society.<sup>14</sup> Bose, basing his view on the *Arthashastra* and the *Dharma sastras*, is of the opinion that Nishad meant the offspring of Brahman of a Sudra woman.<sup>15</sup>

Still others identify it with the Pulinda tribe mentioned in the *Aitreya Brahman* and the edicts of Ashoka.<sup>16</sup> Venkatachar quotes Enthoven to the effect that the word Bhil occurs for the first time in the *Katha Sarita Sagar* wherein mention is also made of a Bhil chief opposing the progress of another king through the Vindhya.<sup>17</sup>

Whether Bhils are autochthonous or not, is very difficult to say. But there is no tradition to suggest that they were ever masters of the plains of Malwa. Malwa, as we know, was colonized in very early times. At the time of Buddha, Malwa was a highly developed republic. Malcolm says, "The Bhils of Malwa and neighbouring provinces have no record of ever having possessed the plains of the country; but they assert, and on authentic grounds, that they long maintained exclusive possession of the hilly tracts under their leaders, many of whom were as distinguished by their character as by their wealth and power. The accounts we have of the comparatively recent conquest of Dongurpoor, Banvara, Jabooah, Barwanee, and other principalities fully establish the truth of this pretension".<sup>18</sup>

### *Their Earlier Home :*

It may be safe to suggest that Rajasthan was the real home of the Bhils. When the Muslim invasion of India began in the 11th century the Rajputs were pressed to leave the Indo-Gangetic plain and migrated to Rajasthan, in turn expelling the Bhils from there. Thus there was a contact between Bhils and the proud Rajputs who were not averse to accepting Bhil maidens as brides. The unions resulted into splitting the Bhil tribe into Hinduisised sub-tribes such as Bhilalas, Patlias, etc. The introduction of Rajput blood led to further distinctions among the Bhils:

*The Uje (pure) and Mele (impure) Bhils which do not inter-marry.*

This view is strengthened by the tradition among the Rajputs to recognize the Bhil as the former residents and masters of the land by the fact that some Rajput chiefs could not assume the throne until they were marked on the forehead with a Bhil's blood.<sup>19</sup> The alliance between the Bhils and the Rajputs resulting in marriages and other forms of social intercourse, however, were short lived. Hinduism became more orthodox in Rajasthan and because of their habits of beef eating, the Bhils slowly started losing the position of equality and began to be treated with contempt. This change again forced them to migrate to the Central highlands where they had preforce to wander in the most inaccessible, remote and difficult regions on the hills, where, subsequently, they had to make their homes.

Major Erskine, writing in 1908, has something very uncomplimentary to say of the Bhils, "About thirty years ago, a native student in an examination for a University degree described the tribe thus, 'The Bhil is a very black man, but more hairy. He carries in his hand a long spear, with which he runs you when he meets you, and afterwards throws your body in the ditch. By this you may know a Bhil' ".<sup>20</sup>

### *Marathas and the Bhils :*

However exaggerated and naive be the description, it does underline heavily the predatory and lawless habits of the Bhils during nearly two centuries of their recent past. The transformation of these former masters of the Rajasthan into free-booters and unabashed savages can be traced to the Maratha invasion of the Central India in the seventeenth century. Marathas treated the Bhils in a most cruel and merciless manner. If they found a Bhil in the disturbed part of the country, he was, without any enquiry, flogged and hanged. Hundreds were thrown over high cliffs, and large bodies of them, assembled under promise of pardon, were beheaded or blown from guns. Their

women were mutilated or smothered by smoke, and their children smashed to death against stones.<sup>21</sup>

Writing of the conditions in the Nimar District in the middle of the eighteenth century, Luard has also described the death and destruction heaped on the Bhils. Describing the campaigns of extermination against the Bhils, he writes, "these people were brought into Khargone<sup>22</sup> and were required to give security for good behaviour. On doing so they were presented with a special collar to wear. All Bhils who did not give in were caught and beheaded at the *chabutra* in Khargone. The pillar to which the victims were bound for execution is still extant as also the axe used".<sup>23</sup>

Forsyth also has given a very graphic description of the unsettled conditions then prevailing in the whole of Central India. Says he, "The hill tribes, Pindari plunderers and lawless Maratha soldiery with their daggers at each other's throats, were unanimous in robbing the husbandmen who ploughed their fields by night with swords and matchlocks tied to the shafts of their ploughs or purchased peace by heavy payments of blackmail".<sup>24</sup>

It is evident that the tribal people were forced to a profession of lawlessness and savagery as a consequence of being chased from pillar to the post by a succession of invaders. First came the Rajputs who deprived them of their legitimate lands in the Rajasthan plains and pursued them to the most inaccessible parts of the hills. Then came the Marathas to whom the tribal life was no more precious than a common fly. Deprived of land to cultivate and opportunity to live at peace, the struggle for existence forced upon them a mode of guerilla warfare. Unbiased towards the tribal people, Forsyth readily admits that they were greatly maligned in being described as 'savage and intractable'.<sup>25</sup> Malcolm also admits that "believing themselves doomed to be thieves and plunderers they have been confirmed in their destiny by the oppression and cruelty of neighbouring governments, increased by an avowed contempt for them as outcasts. The common answer of a Bhil when charged with theft and robbery is, "I am not to blame; I am the Mahadeva's thief." This fatalism, out-

● come as it was of the anarchy of the times and the historical development of centuries preceding it, had however, not changed the nature and the basic character of the tribal folks. When once the conditions settled down and they found their necks safe from the knives of the marauders they took to more peaceful professions. Forsyth, paying them the tribute of an administrator who had known them well as Settlement officer, says, "they have long since gained the character of being a remarkably submissive and law-abiding people".

But the lands they lost to the Rajputs and other castes ranging high in the Hindu hierarchy were never restored to them, and to this day they cultivate the most unsuitable lands. Their overwhelming dependence on forests is also to be traced to the same facts of history.

### *Marriage :*

Bhilis are not permitted to marry in their own gotra (sept) nor can they marry outside the tribe. Thus the tribe is endogamous, while the sept is exogamous. No one can marry in the same sept in which he has already married for at least three generations. The same prohibition applies to marriage in the sept to which his mother belonged. There is no prohibition of a man marrying two sisters.

The marriage is generally adult. But the Hindu influence has slowly effected a marked change in this respect. Child marriage is considered more respectable and fashionable today than it ever was in the past. Even then adult marriage is the rule. Several types of marriages are prevalent among the Bhilis. They are:

- (i) *Lagan Mandwa* (Hinduised form of religious marriage).
- (ii) *Lugda-ladi* (An abbreviated form of the conventional marriage).
- (iii) *Aa kharana ar uchal jana* (marriage by intrusion).
- (iv) *Ghees kar le jana* (marriage by abduction).
- (v) *Ghar jamai* (matrilocal marriage).

### *Lagan Mandwa*

In the more orthodox type of marriage reliable persons representing the two parties meet at the place of the girl's father and work out the details of bride-price which varies between Rs. 6 and Rs. 140. Besides cash, grain and *gur* are also given. When the terms of the marriage have been settled the betrothal ceremony known as *chhak* takes place.

On the day of the marriage the bridegroom's party goes to the bride's place accompanied with friends and relatives. It is customary in Bhil marriages for the ladies of the household to join the party. Generally the boy is mounted. The party is led by a person or a group of persons beating a drum in a singsong way. The bridegroom is dressed for the occasion in white *dhoti* and red *angrakha* and wears an imitation crown known as *maur*. The night is spent in an orgy of drinking and dancing to the accompaniment of wild and rousing music. After an exchange of presents the upper-garments of the boy and the girl are joined and seven times the couple goes round the nuptial fire lighted in the middle of the *mandap*. Again there is feasting and singing and dancing. Next day the party returns with the bride.

This is more or less the orthodox and Hinduized form of marriage. Greater the degree of Hindu influence, the more would be the performance of the customary rituals and the greater would be the divergence from the truly tribal form. Hinduized tribal castes which regard themselves higher in the social scale insist upon the presence of a Brahmin priest to conduct their ceremonies. This type of marriage costs anywhere between Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000 these days. This, looking to the economic condition of the tribe, is an exorbitant sum. The poorer and more humbler people take recourse to other forms of marriage.

### *Lugda Ladi*

This is a more economical form of marriage as compared to the religious form described earlier. The bride-price is settled as in the orthodox form and on an auspi-

rious day the bride-price is made over to the bride's father. On a suitable day the boy's father takes the wedding party consisting of not more than five persons to the bride's place. The bride is presented with a new set of *lugra* and the marriage is over. After a day or two the party returns with the bride.

### *Aa Bharana or Uchal Jana (Intrusion)*

Sometimes, when the girl takes a liking to a boy, she enters the boy's house by the backdoor and silently starts doing the household work. Generally this happens with the full consent and knowledge of the boy. After the girl has forced her entry, the boy's father informs the girl's father of the incident and invites him to talk over the terms of settlement of bride-price etc. The bride's father, accompanied by the *Patel* and *Panchs* of his village come to the boy's father for the talks. This is known as *jhagra todna* or settling the dispute. The bride price is settled and duly paid.

### *Bhaga kar le jana (or capture)*

This is capture only in name. Really speaking it is an elopement with mutual consent. For the sake of her self-respect the girl insists on the boy dragging her a few steps so that she may not be accused of having taken the lead in elopement which is considered unladylike. This type of marriage generally follows the *Bhagoria* festival held during the *Holi* festival. The lovers, taking advantage of the festival, take to the jungle celebrating the honey-moon there. Later, they return to the boy's house and the usual settlement of bride-price follows.

This form of marriage is perhaps a reminder of the marriage by capture that might have existed among the Bhils at some point of their history.

### *Ghar Jamai (Matrilocal Marriage)*

This is a very characteristic and economically very significant form of marriage. When a boy is too poor to be able to pay the bride-price, he agrees to work for a stipulated number of years at the bride's place. The

stipulated period is 7-9 years. After the expiry of this period, the girl becomes his lawfully wedded wife. Even during the course of 'apprenticeship' they live like man and wife, and the children born during this period are considered legitimate. Generally, after the expiry of the term the boy sets up his own independent household, not far from that of his father-in-law's. This type of marriage is taken recourse to either in case of the poverty of the boy or when the girl's father has no brothers or sons to help him in the agricultural operations.

The *ghar jamai* is a laughing stock of the whole village. The Bhils have a witty proverb about the *ghar jamai* :

Son-in-law in a distant part,  
 Like flowers sweet, is dear to heart,  
 But, should he come to stay in town,  
 Half his worth is at once down !  
 And, God forbid ! that his own spouse  
 Should lodge him in her father's house !  
 A beast of burden, loaded at will :  
 To this sad lot, he's condemned still ! <sup>26</sup>

### *Widows*

There is no prohibition against the re-marriage of the widows. They can marry any person they like. Widow remarriage is known as *Natra*. The bride-price in case of widows is generally very low. The common practice is for the widow to marry her *devar* (husband's younger brother) if he is unmarried. This is known as *devar-batta* (Levirate). The widows are, as a rule, not permitted to take the children along with them to the house of the new husband.

### *Divorce*

Divorce is common among the Bhils. There is no formal procedure gone through for effecting a divorce. The woman just leaves the husband and enters the household of a man with whom she has had a prior understanding. This would be simply *Aa bharana*. In such an event the former husband will demand the refund of bride-price and the expenses he had incurred over the present woman.

A *jhagra-todna* panchayat would be held and the sum settled. Sometimes the divorce is settled through the Panchayat, in which case the break of the relationship is signified by breaking a twig or tearing a piece of cloth.

In cases of the existence of bad blood between the former and the new husbands, or a refusal by the new husband to pay the damages, a bloody feud ensues, resulting in murders and arson running a long course of destruction in the families concerned and passing on from one generation to another as a sacred behest !

### *Polygamy*

It is prevalent in the tribe. But the practice is not very common. The reason is largely economic. As we have seen, the Bhil marriage is a costly affair and those who can afford it are few. The explanation generally given by a Bhil for taking another wife is invariably economic. "She would share the work in the field and the house".

Polyandry is altogether unknown.

### *Death*

The Bhils cremate their dead. Only young babies and victims of leprosy and small pox and snake-bite are buried. The corpse is laid on a bier, feet pointing south and head towards the north. After the body is consumed the unburnt bones are collected and placed in an earthen vessel and buried near the house. Sometimes the bones are deposited in some stream nearby. On the twelfth day at the spot of burial of the ashes a ceremony is held.

Bhils give expensive feasts to pacify the dead. These feasts are known as *Nukta*. Mutton, liquor, rice, *makki roti* and *gur* etc. are served in these feasts. This feast is an elaborate affair and several villages join these feasts for which no formal invitation is deemed essential. If the deceased came of a poor family and his family was not in a position to bear the expenses, the friends and relatives coming for the *nukta* bring grains, *gur* etc. with them as presents.

## *Religion*

The religion of the Bhil is generally described as animism. But a long contact with Hindus has resulted in the adoption of many of the Hindu gods and goddesses by them. The feeling of caste, also a result of Hindu contact, spurs their desire to be considered high in the social esteem. And, as a result, the Bhils living in contact with Hindus like to be regarded as Hindus. Particularly Mahadeva, Ganesh and Kali Mata, they have made their own. Instances are not rare where they worship Vishnu (Rama and Krishna *avatars*). As a matter of fact, Hindu religion itself is not a religion in the strict sense of the term but an agglomeration of religions not infrequently widely divergent and markedly antithetical to each other. It has been described by some as a vast canopy under which are collected all sort of gods and goddesses. Many practices of caste Hindus are purely animistic in origin, concept and observance. To describe animism purely as that category of faith which includes all "pre-Hindu religions of India", would not be quite accurate in the light of the modern theories and views. Hinduism not only absorbed all faiths existing in India before the Aryans came, but also developed and evolved them in higher forms. Mahadeva, for instance, definitely a god of the Austric Proto-Australoids, in the post-Aryan era, became altogether different.

The most important of the Bhil gods is the *Baba deo* or *Bara deo* who is the village tutelary deity. Every village has a separate piece of land allotted to *Baba deo*. It is marked either by a tree or pegs of *sagi* wood. The piece of land is held sacred and the forest on the land is never cut. Offerings of earthen wares, clay horses and toy swings are made to *Baba deo*. He is specially worshiped in the month of *Shravan* (JULY-AUGUST). On the day fixed for worship the whole of the Bhil village collects round the '*Baba deo*' and after making offerings spends the day in drinking and singing. In cases of ailments *Baba deo* is offered goats, cocks and other things to pacify his wrath.

### *Bhilalas*

Bhilalas are included in the Bhil group and are quite numerous, next only to the Bhils.

Bhilalas claim to be Rajputs and do not inter-marry and inter-dine with the Bhils whom they consider to be of low status. Luard<sup>29</sup> suggests that they are a mixed caste as a result of Rajput men marrying Bhil women of Central India. Russel<sup>30</sup> confirms this view and further suggests that Bhilala is a corruption of Bhilwala, a term that might have been applied to those Rajput immigrants who came to central India and in order to acquire estates here took the short cut of marrying the daughters of Bhil chieftains who then possessed these lands. Luard suggests a different origin of the term. He is of the opinion that the term Bhilala is derived from Bhilara meaning a Bhil by mistake (ara).<sup>31</sup> Fuchs, who conducted anthropometric measurements of Bhils and Bhilalas, however, holds a very different view. He regards them, "racially more or less pure Bhils", and suggests, that "having acquired a better social and economic status, they have segregated from the ordinary Bhil tribal".<sup>32</sup>

The Bhilalas consist of two main groups, the *Bade* and the *Chhote*. There is no inter-marriage between these groups. But there is no prohibition of a Bhilala of *Bade* (superior) caste taking water from the hands of another of the *chhote* (inferior) caste. Both these castes are further split up into numerous exogamous septs. In their customs and beliefs Bhilalas are hardly distinguishable from Bhils. Perhaps the most important distinction lies in the fact that Bhilalas do not eat beef, whereas the Bhils do.

Malcolm has written very contemptuously of the Bhilalas.<sup>33</sup> He has reflected the turbulent and unsettled condition then prevailing in Central India. And, none was more actively taking advantage of the existing chaos and anarchy than the Bhilala chiefs of Nimar and Rath. A very notable example of this type was the Bhilala, Nadirshah, who had his capital in the small village of Jamnia near Mandu. At one time he had 200 horses and

700 soldiers.. He was subsequently captured by the English and banished to Allahabad.

Their religious beliefs and social customs are like those of the Bhils with the only difference that the degree of acculturation due to Hindu influence is greater. Because of their historical association with the Rajputs they have better lands and economically they are better off.

### *Language*

Hutton regards Bhili as an Indo-Aryan tongue and suggests that it probably replaced an old Dravidian tongue and perhaps a Kolarian language before that." At present it is found overladen with Gujarati and to some extent Marathi.

### *Social Customs*

Bhils are very fond of tattooing, and get various designs made on the cheeks, forehead, arms, chest and legs. In inaccessible areas the tattooing is done by the village people with *Babul*<sup>ii</sup> thorns and colour obtained from *Balor* and *Bijan*. Since the opening up of the areas we can see the tattooing machine in operation in the village hats in the tribal areas. The tattoo operator has a very busy time, particularly, with the tribal belles who flock to his shop in great numbers.

### *Ornaments*

Bhils are equally fond of ornaments and spend a good deal of money on this form of decoration. Even men like to wear ornaments in their ears and neck. The ornaments are generally made of silver and *Kansa*.

### *Clothes*

Men generally wear a *langoti* (loincloth) which just covers the organs leaving the major parts of the buttocks exposed. Even the most sophisticated Bhil prefers this *langoti* when at home or working in the fields and forests. It is only when he visits the market that he wraps a *picholi* (a piece of long cloth) round his waist, and some-

times puts on a colourful waistcoat known as *jhuldi* and a short turban known as *pagdi*. The *pagdi* invariably carries a short comb tucked inside.

Women wear a skirt known as *ghagra* with red or black prints. The *ghagra* is not strictly a skirt for it is not stitched round. It is more like a long piece of cloth with the top carrying a *nara* to tie it round the waist. The *ghagra* is folded in front and passed between the legs and fixed at the back in the fashion male dhotis, leaving a major part of the thighs exposed. The breasts are covered with a short *kanchli* with open back. An *orhni* on the head, also of a red or black print, completes the female dress. The *orhni* is generally worn by married girls. The children up to the age of 5-6 years go about naked. All their clothes are sold ready-made at the village hats. The art of the needle is almost unknown.

Men sometimes wear shoes which are called *khahda* in the Bhili. Women generally go bare-footed.

### *Food*

The staple food of the Bhils is *makka* (*zea mays*) and *jowar* (*sorghum vulgate*) and *bajra* (*pencillaria spicata*) and other small millets. *Makki* is used for bread (finely ground) and *thuli* (coarsely ground) which they call as *rabdi*. The bread or *roti* is taken with salt and chillies. Chutney of *kaitha* (*Feronia elephantum*) and other fruits are also used with *roti*. Among the dals their preference is for *urd* (*phaseolus radiatus*) and *tuar* (*cajanus indicus*). specially the latter. *Rabdi* is commonly taken with butter-milk. Generally vegetables are not used except those that grow wild. A very popular dish is thick and small *makki* bread covered with *palas* leaves and baked in slow fire. This is known as *pania*. *Gur* is highly relished. Rice is rarely eaten.

The cooking is done in earthen wares and not more than a *karhai* (deep frying pan made of iron) or *lota* (of brass or copper) and a *thali* (copper plate) would be found in most of the Bhil houses. For drinking water they use dried and hollowed gourds. Oil (*sesamum* and ground-nut) is commonly used for cooking. Milk and ghee are

not used by the householders. They are reserved for the weekly markets where they are sold for purchasing weekly provisions of oil, chillies, *haldi*, salt, *gur* and kerosene, etc. They take meat whenever they can get it.

In times of distress they boil leaves, roots and wild tubers and eat them.

### *House*

Bhils live in thatched huts. Each hut is situated on a high point separated from other huts. The hut is a simple and temporary affair. For long Bhils were a wandering tribe, going from one place to another in search of land and food. It is only in the last fifty years that they have settled down. The temporary nature of their hamlets is partly explained by this unsettled past and partly the explanation lies in their superstitious beliefs. If there is a sudden death in the family, they change their residence in the hope, perhaps, of throwing off the bad spirits.

The house is a *katcha* affair. The walls are generally made of mud and stones or bamboo or wattle and daub. The roof is thatched with grass, leaves or tiles. Generally *khajur* (*phoenix sysvestria*) trees are used to serve as beams. *Sag* (*tectona grandis*), *Anjan* (*Hardwickia binata*), *Sarali* or *Harsingar* or *Seharo* (*nyctanthes arbortritus*), *Salai* (*boswellia serrata*), etc., are used for various constructions in the hut.

The hut is erected by the tribals themselves with the help of their friends, relatives and neighbours.

### *Saharias*

Saharias are the third most numerous tribe of Madhya Bharat, numbering more than a lakh and concentrated in the Northern hilly regions of the State.

Saharias are the member of a very widespread kolarian tribe extending from North Madhya Bharat in the Centre to Andhra and Orissa on the Eastern coast of India. In different parts of the country they are known by different names such as *sawara*, *savar*, *sora*, *sacra*, etc.<sup>35</sup>

Saharias find mention in the vedic literature. *Aitreva Brahman* mentions 'sahara' as a well defined tribe. The

later day historians have also mentioned this tribe. Pliny and Ptolemy mention them by the name Sabara, saying very little about their geographical distribution.<sup>36</sup> Maha-bharat (*santiparva*) makes a vague mention of the tribe. In Ramayana we find a more well defined and pointed reference of the tribe. In the *Aranyakanda* there is a description of Rama visiting the Sabara region, and his meeting with a pious Sabara lady. Mazumdar considers this area to be a "portion of the modern Chhattisgarh which is in the neighbourhood of the upper stream of the Mahanadi".<sup>37</sup> Mazumdar further says that as late as the 8th century A.D. Pallava malla of south India, in his record of his military expedition describes this area as the land of the Sabaras (Sabhor).<sup>38</sup> Puranas speak of Sabaras as 'Vindhya mauliks', meaning thereby, the original inhabitants of the Vindhya. Howsoever uncertain be the evidence of the Puranas, there can be no doubt as to the presence at one time of the Saharias in the highlands of central India. Banabhatta and Dandin (7th Century A.D.) refer to the stronghold of this tribe in the Vindhya. Poet Vakapati (also 7th Century A.D.) has described Vindhya-chal<sup>39</sup> as a shrine of the goddess of the Sabaras where leaf-wearing Sabaras offer human sacrifice. The Hindu hero of this poem of Vakapati worshipped this Sabar goddess as 'Kali Vindhya-wasini'. General Cunningham has written of a principality of Sabaras known as 'Suiriki raj' near Gazipur. As a further proof of the extensive sway of the Sabaras may be cited the legend that the famous shrine of Jagannath Puri was originally in the custody of the Sabaras. Even today the priests and servants of the shrine belong to a sub-caste of the Sabaras. On the basis of the above evidence Mazumdar rightly infers that the "Sabaras have been in the forest tract of mid-India from pre-historic days".<sup>40</sup>

At present the Sabaras are not found in large numbers in the Satpuras, the Maikal range and the Mahadeo hills where they were numerically very strong in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. They are mostly found in Orissa and Andhra. Their disappearance from the central India

(eastern) is generally attributed to the rise of the Gonds who replaced them. By the Ninth Century the Sabara region came to be known as Gondwana. This replacement of a Kolarian tribe by the Gonds has not been explained.

In central India the Sabaras, or Saharias as they are known here, were probably dispossessed and displaced by Rajput clans as a result of the pressure exerted on the latter by the Muslim invasion. The various rulers including Mauryas and the Guptas who held sway over these areas in various periods, more or less, did not interfere with the Saharias much. When these rulers showed signs of weakness the Saharias strengthened their rule. This waxing and waning of the tribal influence continued for centuries till the rise of various Rajput clans. Venktachar says, "We should rather look to the period of Rajput settlement for the disintegration of tribal areas, for the disappearance of certain aboriginal tribes and for the formation of Hinduized aboriginal castes".<sup>41</sup> For the displacement of the Saharias we should look to the fortunes of the Kachhwahas who held Gwalior and Narwar and Parihars who held Bundelkhand before the Chandels. Subsequently, in the 15th century the Bundelas held sway over this region having successfully defeated the Parihars and the Chandels. The Kachhwahas and Parihars must have carved out new States for themselves after dispossessing the Saharias.

The dispossession of the Saharia and the inundation of his language and culture by the immigrating Rajputs was facilitated by the easy terrain and topography of the northern lowlands. Venktachar rightly says, "The nature of the north-Gwalior country could afford them no shelter as the Vindhya have done for the other tribes".<sup>42</sup>

Anthropologically, the Saharias are a Kolarian (or Munda) tribe.<sup>43</sup> In central India they have been so thoroughly submerged by the successive waves of Hindu migrations that they have now lost their language and speak the language of the area they inhabit.<sup>44</sup> Even in Andhra where the Savaras are in large number their language has been heavily influenced by Telugu.<sup>45</sup> But even then the Austric elements are clearly discernable.

### *Marriage*

Marriage among the Saharias is a very simple affair as compared to the Bhils and Bhilalas. The marriage is generally very early—10 to 14 years. As it usually happens in early marriages, the selection of the bride or the bridegroom is made by the parents. The selection of the partners is a very casual affair. Sometimes unknown persons happen to meet on some road. They get acquainted and start talking. One has a marriageable girl and the other a marriageable boy. If they like each other and approve the details of their domestic circumstances the marriage is fixed. Later, the details are settled and the marriage is performed.

### *Dowry*

Among the Saharias the *dahej* is not an important consideration. It is the bride's father here who gives the *dahej* which is known as *var-dhan* or bridegroom's price. Poor people who are unable to give any *dahej* generally present their daughters with certain forests. The forest does not belong to him, what he endows is only the right of use of that forest. The father henceforth does not go to that forest for collecting minor produce.

### *Marriage Ceremony*

More well to do Saharias use *palki* (palanquin) to carry the bridegroom to the bride's place. Ordinary people go on foot or in bullock carts. The *barat* stays for a day and a night at the bride's place and after the ceremony is over, the party returns home the next day. Generally no band is employed for the marriage ceremonies. The usual custom is to beat copper plates (*thalis*) which make a sing song noise.

The *purohit* or Hindu priest is called for performing the marriage. The marriage is largely Hinduized with usual fire as witness and 7 circles round the nuptial fire.

Marriage is quite cheap. In case of the poverty of the bride's father the whole village donates *rotis* or breads for

feeding the bridegroom's party. The usual menu at marriage parties consists of *jowar roti* and *jowar karhi*.

Widow remarriage is common. Divorce is also prevalent.

### *Birth*

The Saharia mother continues to work till the day of delivery. Delivery sometimes takes place in the forest where she had gone to collect forest produce for barter, or dead-fuel for domestic use. The other women attend to the delivery and bring the mother home. She takes rest for a day or two after which she resume her old routine.

The birth of a male child is heralded by the firing of guns and much merrymaking. Village women collect round the mother, sing songs and do the *tona-tutka* to drive the evil spirits away.

During the maternity period the mother is fed on *gur* and *sonth*, mahua-water and *jowar dalia*.

The naming of the child is done by some old relative in the presence of friends and relatives. After the ceremony *gur* is distributed to the invitees.

### *Death*

The Saharias cremate their dead. The males are carried for cremation with the accompaniment of music. Women are cremated together with their ornaments. But if the ornaments are made of gold or silver they are taken off before cremation.

No food is cooked in the house of the bereaved family for three days. This period is regarded as impure. The friends of the bereaved family bring food for the bereaved from their homes. On the fourth day there is bathing and washing of the house. Those who can afford it have a simple feast on this occasion.

### *Houses*

The Saharias live in compact villages unlike the Bhils. The houses are arranged in a circular pattern with the common cattle-sheds forming the centre of the circle.

The houses are generally made of stone and mud, with thatched roofs. The Saharia house is neat and well kept. In wild areas the Saharias build watch towers known as *Ghopna* or *Korua* which are used for sleeping purposes. The *Ghopna* is a simply thatched tiny hut supported on four high poles. The *Ghopna* has no walls, the roof extends to the floor level. This *Korua* or *Ghopna* puts the Saharias out of reach of the prowling tigers.

### *Life and Living*

Saharias live a very simple life, eating frugally and wearing coarsest clothes. The males put on a *dhoti* tucked back and wears a shirt or *phatuhi* to cover the torso. The headgear consists of *safa* or turban. The women wear *ghangra* or *dhoti*, *saluka* (blouse) and *orhni* with *ghangra*. The children go about naked.

They are fond of music and folk tales. In winters they sit round bon-fires and gossip for hours, recounting their experiences of the days of axe cultivation.

### *Korku*

Korku is a Munda or Kolarian tribe numbering nearly thousand and confined to the district Dewas of the Plateau division.

The appellation Korkus is derived from the Kolarian language, meaning 'men' or 'tribes men'. 'Koru' in this language means a man and 'Ku' is a plural termination.<sup>46</sup> Korkus are commonly held to be racially akin to the Kols and Korwas of Chhota Nagpur.<sup>47</sup> While present day ethnologists consider them to be closely related with the Sabaras, despite some superficial changes that have been brought about by acculturation.<sup>48</sup> Mazumdar has taken great pains to prove that the Mahadeo and Maikal Hills and the Sat-puras in the middle India were once populated with Korkus and Sabaras and when the Gonds came into power in these areas during the rule of the Hindus they replaced the Korkus and Sabaras altogether.<sup>49</sup> Venkatachar, writing of the Korkus of the Central India Agency in 1932 says, "In these parts they appear to have been ousted by the Gonds who held the Narbada valley till they in turn were sub-

dued by the Muslims and the Marathas".<sup>50</sup> As a matter of fact Korkus are the only tribe speaking the Austro-Asiatic language in the Madhya Bharat. During the census of 1931 the number speaking the Korku language was very small and "not indigenous to central India and merely a spill-over from the Satpuras".<sup>51</sup>

Korkus, like Bhils and Gonds trace their origin to the Mahadeva. Russell and Hiralal have quoted at length a legend of their genesis as recorded by Crosthwaite.<sup>52</sup> This legend tells us that Ravan the Asura king of *Lanka* found the Vindhya and Satpura ranges to be uninhabited. He requested Mahadeo to populate them. Mahadeo discovered the suitable soil to make images of a man and a woman, and as soon as he tried to put life into them, Indra sent two fiery horses to trample the images to dust. Then Mahadeo made the image of a dog and succeeded in putting life into it. This dog kept the horses away and allowed Mahadeo to put life into the images of a man and a woman. These two became the ancestors of the Korku tribe. Korkus tell another tale of their origin which speaks of Dharanagar (modern Dhar) as being the seat of their forefathers. The tale runs like this: Once these forefathers went out hunting and followed a *sambhar* which ran on and on ultimately entering a cave in the Mahadeo or Panchmarhi hills. There Mahadeo appeared before them in the form of a hermit and revealed that he had lured them there to settle in that region and worship him. A Korku Zamindar continues to be the hereditary guardian of Mahadeo's shrine at Panchmarhi. The tale as such is regarded as merely an effort to connect the ancestry of the tribe with the Rajputs.<sup>53</sup>

### *Funeral rites*

Korkus generally bury their dead. The body is laid in the grave, face upwards with head pointing to the south.

### *Gond*

Gonds are the least numerous of the tribes of Madhya Bharat

Russell and Hiralal<sup>54</sup> have described Gonds as the principal tribe of the Dravidian family. This classification seems to be based on the linguistic similarities between the language of the Gonds and the Dravidian languages. Venkatachar probes deeper and says, "the Gonds may be the pre-Dravidians of the South on whom the Dravidians imposed their language, and due to some causes in the regions of North-east Madras, there must have been a large-scale displacement of the tribes into the interior of the Central regions".<sup>55</sup> If we accept this view, the Gonds must have been living in the South long before the Dravidians entered the scene. This view is further supported by the fact that 'Gond' is not a tribal appellation. The name by which they designate their tribe is 'Koitur' or 'koi'. The word Gond is an imposition of the Hindus and the Mohamedans.<sup>56</sup> Hislop's view that Gond was a form of 'Kond' (Khond) tribe, and K and G being interchangeable the Kond became Gond.<sup>57</sup> He further states that the Telugu people call the Khonds, Gond or Kod (kor). Thus the two names Gond and Kod, by which the Telugu people know the Khonds, are practically the same as the names Gond and Gad of the Gonds in the Central Provinces. And Russell admits that "it seems highly probable that the designation Gond was given to the tribe by the Telugu and it is likely that they came from the South into the Central Provinces".<sup>58</sup> Language not being the same as a race<sup>59</sup> it leaves open the question of the racial origin and history of the Gonds. The guess may be hazarded that they are probably Proto-Australoids, the race with which is associated the culture of the Mohanjodaro and Harappa. Their old custom of burying the dead also points to a similarity with the people of the Mohanjodaro.

In the C.P. the Gonds destroyed the Hindu dynasties by subversion<sup>60</sup> and by 14th century established their own kingdom and ruled well. Rani Durgawati of Garhmandla was perhaps the greatest figure that sprang from the Gond tribe. She occupies a high place in the history of India because of her good governance and bravery in face of the Mughal repressions. But, what they had gained from the Hindus they had to lose to the Marathas. In the

eighteenth century they fell before the onslaught of the Marathas and took refuge in the hills. This dispossession they tried to avenge by indiscriminate murder and loot.<sup>6</sup> From gentle and suave plainsman only a couple of centuries back, he had to become a forester and crude cultivator, tilling bad land and raising crude grains.

The Gond marriage is performed in several ways. The Raj Gonds are more Hinduised and they have more elaborate marriage ceremonies. The *dahej* is not an important feature of Gond marriage. The Gond marriage ceremony is marked by a special feature. The marriage procession starts from the place of the bride and the marriage ceremony is performed at the place of the bridegroom. The bridegroom's father gives a feast after the marriage. Poor Gonds, who cannot afford a feast, generally distribute a piece of bread to each member of the party, who eat it with some water and the feast is over. This is known as '*pani torna*'. Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed.

The most notable custom of the Gonds relates to their practice of death ceremony. The Gonds bury their dead, head lying to the north.

The Gonds speak Gondi which is a Dravidian language.

## CHAPTER III TRIBAL DEMOGRAPHY

### *History of Census Operations*

The first regular Census of the population of Central India was held on the 17th February 1881. Earlier, in 1820, Sir John Malcolm had taken a partial census of the Malwa section of the Central India.<sup>1</sup> Even the 1881 census was not very regular or satisfactory. Commenting on the returns of this census, Sir Lepel Griffin, the Agent to the Governor-General in Central India, said that for "comparative and deductive purposes they were not worth the paper on which they were written." So far as the primitive tribes are concerned they were not enumerated in the 1881 census. Only a very rough estimate was made of their numbers on the basis of the information obtained from the headmen of the tribes.

Synchronous with those taken in the then British India, the second census was held on the 26th February 1891, and the third on the first March 1901. The fourth census was held on the 10th March 1911. The fifth, sixth and seventh in 1921, 1931 and 1941 respectively. The eighth and the latest census was held in 1951.

### *Lack of Comparative Data*

During the course of these censuses the political and administrative boundaries of Central India have been constantly changing. This makes it very difficult to find common units of area that may lend themselves to comparison. Another factor has been the fluidity of the classification of the primitive tribes. In 1891 census the primitive people were classified under the heading 'Aborigines'. In 1901 this classification was changed and a new term, the Animists, was introduced. In the subsequent censuses the classification was on the basis of religion. The primitive tribes were generally classed as Animists. "The Animist class, so called, for want of a better name included all persons who, when asked to state their religion, replied that they were not Hindus, Musalmans, etc., and belonged

in fact to none of the recognised forms of faith".<sup>3</sup> It was a very inexact and unsatisfactory term. Although it was "meant to include Bhils, Patlias, Gonds, etc".<sup>4</sup> The distinction between Animists and Hindus was so confused that many primitive people were retermed as Hindus. In some jungle tracts the people were indiscriminately retermed as Animists. In 1931 census the term was again changed—the term Animist was replaced by the 'tribal', as "it is never possible to say where the Animist begins and the Hindu ends".<sup>5</sup>

A new departure was made in the 1941 census. In place of the vertical classification based on the difference of religion, the population was classified into horizontal divisions of communities representing the social units of the country. But even here there was no uniformity. In the Holkar State the primitive tribes were treated as one community irrespective of religious belief. And even though the primitive tribes such as Bhils, Bhilalas, Gonds and Korkus, retermed themselves as Hindu by religion they were not included in the Hindu community.<sup>6</sup> Whereas in the Gwalior State the interpretation was altogether different. The 1941 census did not recognise any primitive tribes, 'in the accepted sense of the term'. The Bhils, Bhilalas and the Saharias were recognised as merely backward classes within the Hindu community.<sup>7</sup> But these 'backward classes' "required separate treatment and study and therefore statistical details relating to them" were given separately under the general head Hindus.<sup>8</sup>

. In the 1951 census the religious and communal classification was given a go by. These changes in classification render the returns of various census of very little value for purposes of comparison. But wherever the returns retain sufficient identity they have been utilised for comparative study. These figures have been further supplemented by the Sample Survey conducted by the author.

Fortunately, the classification of Central India into three natural division continues to be the same since 1901. This makes it possible to make certain regional comparisons. Since the Hills Division continues to be over-

whelmingly tribal, it is possible to make comparisons between tribal and non-tribal areas as well.

### *Population*

The only reliable figures of tribal population that exist relate to the 1951 census. According to the 1951 census the population of the Scheduled Tribes was as follows:—

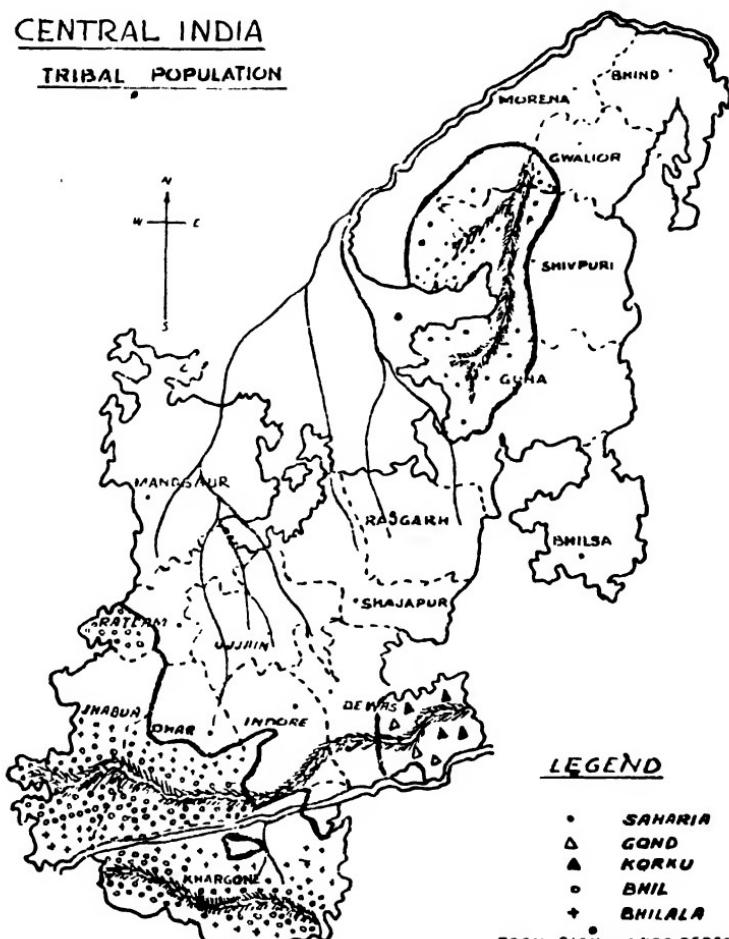
TABLE I  
POPULATION OF THE SCHEDULED TRIBES IN  
MADHYA BHARAT, 1951

State and District	Persons	Males	Females
Madhya Bharat State	10,60,812	5,41,499	5,19,313
<i>Lowland Division</i>	39,399	20,276	19,123
1. Bhind District	385	211	174
2. Gird District	10,981	5,561	5,420
3. Morena District	28,033	14,504	13,529
<i>Plateau Division</i>	1,55,646	79,456	76,190
4. Shivpuri District	41,834	22,407	19,427
5. Guna District	28,288	13,968	14,260
6. Bhilsa District	14,863	7,570	7,293
7. Rajgarh District	1,097	546	551
8. Shajapur District	124	77	47
9. Ujjain District	371	199	172
10. Indore District	561	345	216
11. Dewas District	26,746	13,542	13,204
12. Mandsaur District	54	37	17
13. Ratlam District	41,768	20,765	21,000
<i>Hills Division</i>	8,65,767	4,41,767	4,24,000
14. Dhar District	2,31,734	1,18,539	1,13,195
15. Jhabua District	3,24,800	1,66,639	1,58,161
16. Nimar District	3,09,233	1,56,589	1,52,644

The tribal population of the State consists of the Bhils, Bhilalas (including various sub-tribes), Saharias, Korkus

## CENTRAL INDIA

### TRIBAL POPULATION



and the Gonds. The numerical strength of all these tribes in 1951 was as given in the table referred to above.

The table above shows that the total tribal population of the State in 1951 was 10,60,812. Of this 39,399 or 3.71 per cent. of the tribal population lived in the Lowland; 1,55,646 or 14.67 per cent. in the Plateau and 8,65,767 or 81.62 per cent. in the Hills division. Thus, the Hills had the highest concentration of the tribal population of the State.

The distribution of the tribal population in different divisions and their comparison with general population is given below:—

TABLE II

THE DISTRIBUTION OF GENERAL AND TRIBAL POPULATION  
OVER VARIOUS DIVISIONS

State and Divisions	General Population			Tribal Population	
	Persons	Percen- tage of total popula- tion	Persons	Percen- tage of total popula- tion	Percen- tage of total tribal population
State	79,54,154	100.00	10,60,812	13.34	100.00
Madhya Bharat					
Lowland Division	16,91,858	21.3	39,399	2.33	3.71
Plateau Division	46,15,661	58.00	1,55,646	3.37	14.67
Hills Division	16,46,635	20.7	8,65,767	52.58	81.62

The table shows that the tribal population forms 13.34 percent of the total population of the State. The largest part of the general population is located on the fertile Plateau, accounting for 58.00 percent of the total population. The Lowland accounts for 21.3 percent and the Hills

20.7 percent of the general population.

The tribal population on the other hand has the largest concentration in the Hills where it accounts for 52.58 percent or more than half of the total general population and in the lowland merely 2.33 percent.

This distribution indicates that the tribal population is now confined to the hilly and less fertile areas of the State. The Plateau shows a higher percentage than actually what it is because this Division includes several mountainous and rocky areas as well, which are inhabited by the tribal people. If purely the rolling plains of the Plateau are considered, the tribal population would form a very much smaller fraction of the total population. The highly cultivated and rich areas are all in the hands of the non-tribal. The tribal economy has very largely been fashioned by this characteristic distribution. The pattern of tribal economy that exists in the Hills Division where 81.62 percent of the tribals live, would hold good in other hilly regions of the State as well, whether on the Plateau or the Lowland.

### *Strength of the Various Tribes*

As mentioned earlier this tribal population comprises of the Bhils, Bhilalas, Saharias, Korkus and the Gonds.

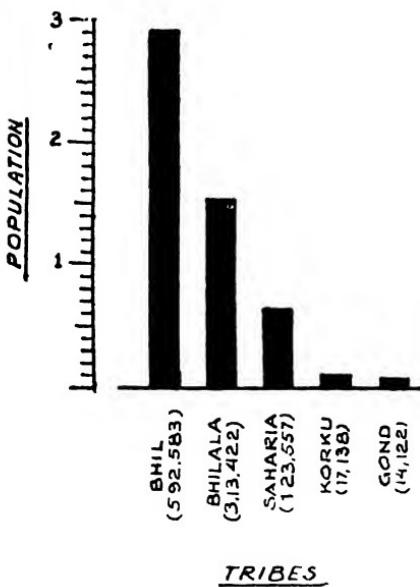
The table below gives the figures of the numerical strength of these tribes in 1951:—

TABLE III  
NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF THE VARIOUS TRIBES IN 1951

No.	Tribe	Persons	Percentage of the total tribal population
1	Bhil	5,92,583	55.87
2	Bhilala	3,13,422	29.55
3	Saharia	1,23,557	11.64
4	Korku	17,138	1.61
5	Gond	14,122	1.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,60,812</b>	<b>100</b>

(District Census Handbooks, 1951 Census)

POPULATION OF THE VARIOUS TRIBES  
IN CENTRAL INDIA IN 1951



The table shows that the Bhils form more than half the total tribal population of the State. If taken together with the Bhilalas, who belong to the same race, with few differences, these two tribes account for 85.42 per cent of the total tribal population. Saharias come next forming 11.64 per cent of the tribal population. Korkus and Gonds are mere thrusts from the neighbouring areas of the Madhya Pradesh (old) and contribute merely 1.61 per cent and 1.33 per cent respectively to the total tribal strength.

### *Distribution of the Tribes*

Table below gives the distribution of these tribes in the various districts of the three natural divisions:—

TABLE IV

#### DISTRIBUTION OF VARIOUS TRIBES IN THE NATURAL DIVISIONS (1951)

Division and District	Bhil	Bhilala	Saharia	Korku	Gond
<i>Lowland</i>					
1. Bhind	—	—	378	1	6
2. Gird	—	—	10,913	2	66
3. Morena	—	—	27,941	—	92
<i>Plateau</i>					
4. Shivpuri	—	—	41,709	3	122
5. Guna	—	—	28,188	5	35
6. Ehlisa	—	—	13,023	2	1,838
7. Rajgarh	—	—	898	2	197
8. Shajapur	—	—	101	4	19
9. Ujjain	—	—	12	3	356
10. Indore	—	—	299	233	29
11. Dewas	—	—	49	16,392	10,305
12. Mandsaur	—	—	—	—	54
13. Ratlam	41,739	—	15	—	14
<i>Hills</i>					
14. Dhar	1,12,947	1,18,738	—	43	6
15. Jhabua	2,30,697	94,103	—	—	—
16. Nimar	2,07,200	1,00,581	31	448	973
Total	5,92,583	3,13,422	1,23,557	17,138	14,112

(District Census Handbooks, 1951 Census)

The table shows that the Bhils are concentrated in the Hills division and the Ratlam district of the Plateau. The Sailana tehsil of the Ratlam district accounts for most of this population. The Sailana tehsil is highly mountainous, situated on the junction of the Vindhya and the Aravallis. The Bhilala is entirely confined to the Hills division, showing great numerical strength in Dhar and Nimar; and least in Jhabua where Bhils are most numerous.

The Saharias are scattered almost all over the State, but are relatively more concentrated in Gird and Morena in the Lowland; and Shivpuri, Guna and Bhilsa in the Plateau. These districts formerly formed a part of the Gwalior State and the major part of the Saharia population of the Madhya Bharat belonged to its territories. These districts are more or less adjacent to each other and the Saharias inhabit contiguous areas of these districts.

### *Growth of Population*

In the absence of reliable data regarding the population of various tribes in the previous census, it is not possible to give any idea of the absolute increase in the numbers of the various tribes. But indirectly there is enough evidence to give a picture of the growth of the tribal population in general.

A study of the growth of population over the last fifty years shows that the total general population of the State has increased by 59.4 per cent since March 1901. For the same period the increase in the Hills division, which is predominantly tribal and where more than 85 per cent of the tribal population is located, has been 110.67 per cent. Of this how much is due to immigration from other divisions and how much is natural increase, it is difficult to say in the absence of figures for migration. But as the migration in this region is very small, the major cause of increase should be excess of births over deaths. It means that the population of this Division has more than doubled itself in the last fifty years. On the other hand, during the same period the population of the fertile Plateau division shows an increase of 60.88 per cent and the Lowland division of merely 26.42 per cent. These figures probably indi-

cate that the tribal population in the Hills division is increasing very rapidly, so much so that, during the last fifty years the State's population has obtained a larger proportion of recruits from the primitive tribes than from the rest of the community.<sup>8</sup> In the year 1899-1900 there was a serious famine in the State. It resulted in a great deal of mortality in the tribal areas causing staggering diminution of their numbers. During 1901-1921 the population of the Lowland division decreased by 11.12 per cent. Despite the fact of catastrophic decline in the tribal population in 1901 the Division showed an increase of 43.75 per cent. This remarkable capacity of the tribal population to reproduce itself at a fast rate is confirmed by the earlier census operations as well. The 1901 census showed in the Hills heavy mortality among the very old and the young—that is at the two extremities of life. This resulted in high birth rate and low death rate in this division.<sup>9</sup> But by 1911 the population of the Hills had recovered from the effects of the great famine of 1899-1900. The Hills showed a rise of 24 per cent—the highest in the Agency.<sup>10</sup>

Again in 1931 census it was observed that the highest increase in population took place in a predominantly Bhil area—the Petlawad Pargana of Holkar State.<sup>11</sup> In Ratlam State the highest increase was in the Bajna tehsil which had 93 per cent Bhil population.<sup>12</sup> In Sailana State, the Raoti tehsil which had 85 per cent Bhil population, showed an increase of 40.3 per cent.<sup>13</sup> In the Southern Central India Agency, which included the predominantly tribal States of Alirajpur, Barwani, Dhar, Jhabua, Jobat and six small estates, an increase of Bhil population contributed largely to general increase in population. Between 1921-31 the Central India Agency showed an increase of 10.5 per cent. The tribal States showed much higher rates of increase:

Ratlam	+ 25.5 per cent.
Sailana	+ 29.7 per cent.
Alirajpur	+ 14.1 per cent.
Barwani	+ 17.4 per cent.
Jhabua	+ 17.4 per cent.

### *Rates of Growth*

The 1941 census also dealt with the variation in the population of tribal communities. The Gwalior State enumerated the Bhil and the Bhilala population inhabiting its southern territories (now forming the Hills division) and the Saharias in the north (now forming the Lowland division and parts of the Plateau division). While this covered all the Saharia area, it touched only a small part of the Bhil and Bhilala population. The Holkar State enumerated the Bhils and Bhilalas, as well as the Gonds and the Korkus in its territories. The table below gives the rates of variation of the tribes at this census:

TABLE V  
RATE OF GROWTH OF THE VARIOUS TRIBES (1941)

Tribe	Popula- tion in 1941	Popula- tion in 1931	Varia- tion	Percen- tage of variation
Bhil (Gwalior)	98,264	86,571	+ 11,693	+ 13.5
Bhil (Holkar)	1,02,676	86,113	+ 16,563	+ 19.2
Bhilala (Gwalior)	42,686	38,455	+ 4,231	+ 10.9
Bhilala (Holkar)	93,682	76,178	+ 17,504	+ 21.9
Saharia	1,04,116	76,219	+ 27,897	+ 36.6
Korku	10,720	10,360	+ 360	+ 3.3
Gond	10,136	9,233	+ 903	+ 9.7

The table shows very divergent results as far as the rates of growth are concerned. Between 1931 and 1941 the Bhil population in the Gwalior State increased by 13.5 per cent. In the contiguous areas of the Holkar State the increase of Bhil population for the same period was 19.2 per cent. It is difficult to explain why there should have been such a difference in the rate of increase of the same tribe inhabiting neighbouring areas in the same region. In the same way the Bhilalas in the Gwalior State show an increase of 10.9 per cent in the decade 1931-1941. The Holkar State shows a rate of increase of 21.9 in the tribe for the same period. The rate of increase in the Holkar

State was nearly twice the rate in Gwalior State. In the absence of reliable death rates and birth rates for the tribes it is not possible to explain these differences. But a significant fact worth noting is that the average number of children born per woman and the proportion of children surviving to children born for these tribes also differ materially in the two States.

TABLE VI  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN AND PROPORTION OF  
CHILDREN SURVIVING TO CHILDREN BORN (1941)

Tribe and territory	Average number of children born per woman	Proportion of children surviving to 1000 children born
Bhil (Gwalior)	3.11	665
Bhil (Holkar)	4.1	703
Bhilala (Gwalior)	3.56	664
Bhilala (Holkar)	4.40	673

The average number of children born per woman in the Bhils of Gwalior is 3.11, whereas in the Holkar State the rate is 4.1. This indicates that the birth rates in the two areas, however close, are not the same. In the same way the rate of survival of children in Gwalior Bhils is 665 whereas in Holkar State it is 703. It means that not only more children per woman are born in the Bhils of Holkar State as compared with the Gwalior Bhils, but the rate of survival in the Holkar territories is also higher. In the Bhilalas of the two States also the same pattern is visible. The Gwalior Bhilala has 3.56 children per woman whereas his Holkar counterpart has 4.40 children. Whereas the Bhilala children in Gwalior have a survival rate of 664, the Holkar counterpart has a survival rate of 673. This shows that more Bhilala children are born in the Holkar State and they have a higher survival rate.

The inference, obviously, is that the birth rates were higher in the Holkar State both in the Bhils and the

Bhilalas, as compared to Gwalior State. And the Bhils and the Bhilalas in the Holkar State have had lower infant mortality than their counterparts in the Gwalior region. This confirms the variations in the rates of growth in the tribes of the two territories.

There is another fact that may be noted here. As compared to the Bhil the Bhilala is more prolific. This is true in both the States. Among the Bhil in the Holkar State 4.1 children are born to every woman. The corresponding number for the Bhilala of the same State is 4.40. In Gwalior the average of children born per Bhil woman is 3.11. The Bhilala in the same State has an average of 3.56.

But the rate of survival is relatively higher in the Bhils. Out of 1,000 children born the Bhil in the Holkar State shows a survival of 703, while the Bhilala shows a survival of 673 only. Likewise the Bhil in the Gwalior has a survival rate of 665, while the Bhilala in the same State has a rate of 664—slightly lower than the Bhils. Taking the average it is seen that Bhils have 3.60 children per woman as compared to 3.98 among the Bhilalas. The proportion of children surviving to children born shows an average of 684 in the Bhils and 668 in the Bhilalas. This indicates relatively higher fertility among the Bhilalas as compared with the Bhils. But the infant mortality seems to be higher in the Bhilalas as compared to the Bhils. This seems to take away whatever little advantage the Bhilala possesses over the Bhils in the matter of fertility. Taking the average of the two States, the decennial rate of growth in Bhilalas works out to 16.4 per cent and the corresponding average figure for Bhils 16.35 per cent. The difference in the rate of growth of the two tribes thus appears insignificant.

### *The Saharias*

The Saharia population shows an increase of 36.6 per cent in the decade 1931-1941. This rate is the highest for any tribe in the Central India. This high rate of increase is not justified by the rate of fertility and the rate of the infant survival in the tribe. The Saharias show only 2.86

children per woman—the lowest for any tribe. The proportion of children surviving to 1,000 children born is 712—the highest. But this high rate of survival among the children is not sufficient to compensate for the lower fertility. Under the circumstances, it appears that probably the tribe was under-enumerated in 1931. And, better enumeration in 1941 inflated the figure of total population, showing an abnormal increase of 36.6 per cent, which is not explained by the fertility and survival rates mentioned above. Thus, this rate of increase can not be considered as authentic. As a matter of fact, compared with the fertility and rate of survival among the Bhils and the Bhilalas the Saharias could not have a very much higher rate of increase.

We can have some idea of the rate of growth of the Saharia population by another device. Taking the present habitation and distribution of the Saharias as broadly the same as in 1941 when this region formed a part of the Gwalior State, we can compare the 1941 population figures of these areas with the 1951 population of the tribe. This would not be very wide of the mark as, except the districts of Indore, Dewas and Rajgarh where Saharias are found in any considerable numbers, the rest of the districts either do not have a sizeable Saharia population or were parts of the Gwalior State. Thus, deducting the Saharia population of Indore, Dewas, and Rajgarh we get a population of 1,22,311 in 1951. For roughly the same areas the population in 1941 was 1,04,116. That gives us an increase of 18,195 in the decade 1941-1951. That would indicate a decennial rate of growth of 17.4 per cent. As stated above, this is but a very rough way of estimating the rate of increase but it does indicate that the rate of growth of 36.6 per cent per decenium is much too high and can only be due to faulty enumeration in 1931 census.

Taking our estimate of rate of growth as a very rough estimate (and that is what it is), the Saharias appear to be quite close to the Bhils and Bhilalas in the increase of numbers, provided there has been no change in this rate between 1931-1941 for which the Saharia estimate has been made.

*The Gond and the Korku*

The Gonds show an increase of 9.7 per cent in the intercensal period 1931-1941. In the absence of fertility figures for the tribe it is not possible to throw any light on this aspect of their life. The Korku shows a rate of increase of 3.3, the lowest of all tribes. Here too, the absence of fertility data prohibits any comments on the reproductive character of the tribe.

The mean decennial rates of growth of the various tribes of Madhya Bharat are compared in the table below, with the rates of growth in India for the same period:

TABLE VII  
MEAN DECENTNIAL GROWTH RATE IN INDIA AND THE  
TRIBES OF MADHYA BHARAT (1931-1941)

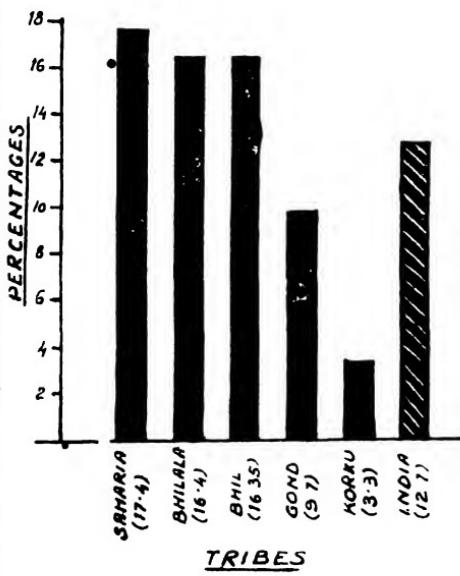
	Mean decennial growth rate
<i>India</i>	12.7
Bhils	16.35
Bhilalas	16.4
Saharias	17.4 (sic)
Korkus	3.3
Gonds	9.7

The Table shows that the Bhils, the Bhilalas and the Saharias had increased faster than the general Indian rate. But the Korkus and the Gonds had increased at a slower rate. Korkus, as a matter of fact, showing a very slow rate indeed.

Within the tribal Madhya Bharat also different tribes show different patterns of growth. These marked differences in the rates of growth in the various tribes in 1931-1941, are not easy to explain. The reasons, perhaps, are largely to be sought in the habitat, the social structure, the religious myths and the economy of the tribes.

Taking the Bhils and the Bhilalas, who show the highest rate of increase, their habitat and economy is very characteristic. The Bhils live in homesteads far apart from one another. There is no compact village in the real

MEAN DECENTRIAL GROWTH RATE IN INDIA  
AND IN THE TRIBES OF CENTRAL INDIA  
(1931 - 1940)



sense of the term. The Bhil village covers a large area with few homes and small population. There is not much of social life after the sunset. Each family shuts itself up in the house and rarely goes visiting during the night time. Fear of cattle lifting and stealing damps whatever little inclination they might be having to go out for company. There is nothing by way of recreation and entertainment. Therefore naturally sex becomes the chief recreation. The Bhil has a peculiar custom of separating the married son to a different homestead. Thus, except small children, there are no grown-ups to come in way of the desirous parents. The general impression is that the frequency of sexual intercourse among the Bhils and the Bhilalas is very high. If the either party is weak and not inclined to much sexual activity, it leads to unhappiness. In case of the weakness of the husband, the results are disastrous. The Bhil woman starts having affairs with some other person. And, adultery in the Bhil code, specially where a married person is concerned, is a sure precursor of violence leading sometimes to murder and family feuds running through generations. Sex, thus, comes to have a social and moral aspect, besides the purely physical one. This leads to higher frequency leading ultimately to higher birth rate. Birth control being unknown, there is no method of voluntary limitation of family. Abortion, the oldest and the most widely practised method of birth control, is confined generally to cases where pregnancy is a result of adultery before or after marriage. Moreover, in the Bhil economy the birth of a baby is not much of a catastrophe. It is rather welcome. If the new born is a girl, she promises good bride-price. If a boy, the new member means a help to the father in tending the cattle and tilling the family land. Instead of meaning a burden on the family, for his wants are few, he is considered as an asset. Besides his value as an extra hand, he has great capital value. He may be given to the *Sahukar* as a *Hali* (attached labour) on a fixed annual rate to pay back part of the family debt. It is not uncommon to come across young boys serving as attached labour during bad years to tide over the difficult

period. A child is an asset to a tribal family so much so that in case one wife fails to bear a child a second and a third wife is taken.

This higher fertility among the tribal people has been explained by Doubleday on the basis of correlation between high standard of living and low birth rate. Doubleday observes that "a deplethic state is favourable to high fertility and a plethic state is inversely correlated with fertility."<sup>14</sup> But perhaps the most balanced and the most lucid light on the increase of numbers has come from Majumdar. Discussing the problems of tribal demography he says, "throughout the historic age, primitive and backward tribes have come into effective contact with alien races and tongues but under the self-sufficing economic system the tribal people were allowed to continue their occupations without much of an interference, and even where tribes had entered the rural economy of the caste groups, the pattern of rural economy both protected them from competition and prevented their disintegration".<sup>15</sup> Further, he continues, "the rapid spread of communications, and the net-work of railways and roadways have brought the tribes face to face with the economic forces of our times and the old policy of *laissez faire* has given place to competition to which compact groups have favourably responded no doubt but the scattered tribes have suffered."<sup>16</sup>

This appears to be the case with the tribal communities in Madhya Bharat as well. The Bhils, Bhilalas and to some extent the Saharias have compact groups and relatively large numbers. And, they show a rate of increase higher than the general Indian average. On the other hand the Korkus and the Gonds who are very small in number, and scattered, have increased at a much slower rate. They seem definitely to have been overwhelmed by the non-tribals they live in contact with.

### *Density*

The density of population gives some idea of the pressure of population on land.

The table below gives the density of population of the Natural Divisions of the State from 1921 to 1951.

TABLE VIII  
VARIATION AND DENSITY OF GENERAL POPULATION OF  
MADHYA BHARAT

State & Division	General Population							
	Percentage increase or decrease			Density				
	1941 to 1951	1931 to 1941	1921 to 1931	1951		1941	1931	1921
<b>Madhya Bharat</b>								
State	+10.9	+13.8	+11.9	171	154	136	121	
Lowland Division	+11.4	+16.0	+10.0	207	186	160	146	
Plateau Division	+11.2	+13.1	+11.5	168	151	134	120	
Hills Division	+ 9.8	+15.8	+15.1	152	138	121	106	

(Census of India, 1951, Vol. XV, Part I-B)

It is observed that the Hills Division comes last in the density of population, supporting only 152 persons per square mile. The figures for area and population of each Natural Division show that the Lowland with 17.6 per cent of land area supports 21.3 per cent of population. The Plateau with 59.1 per cent of area supports 58.0 per cent of population. Whereas the Hills with 23.3 per cent of area support merely 20.7 per cent of the population. The Hills, thus, support the least number of persons per square mile.

This pattern of tribal density is nothing new. In 1911 when the overall density of Central India was 121 the Hills showed a density of 93 only. During the course of various censuses the tribal areas have continued to grow in population but at the same time have continued to be least densely populated.

The reason of the low mean density of population of the tribal areas is not far to seek. The whole tribal country is hilly, largely covered with forest and cut up by numerous ravines. Thus the actual land available for use is much less. Moreover, until recently the areas were almost a closed book. Even now the roads are few and means of transport very scanty.

But even such as the areas are, their statistics of mean density do not show the real state of affairs. One would imagine that having the least of density the tribal areas should be the most prosperous. The higher land per capita should bless them with higher per capita incomes. But this is not the case. The topography of the tribal area is highly wasteful. It is estimated that in the hilly tracts as these 75 per cent of the land should be written off.<sup>18</sup> The write-off in the plains is estimated to be 5 per cent and in plateaus 25 per cent. If considered from the point of view of the topographically usable area the tribal areas are seen to support a much larger population per square mile than the lowland and the plateau.

But all the topographically usable area does not lend itself to cultivation. The area includes large chunks of rocky, barren and unarable land. Besides, the tribal area mainly consists of poor shallow soils. It falls in the Brown belt of rainfall division giving less than 30 inches of rainfall annually. With very little irrigation to supplement it, the area comes under the low density sub-region.

### *Vital Statistics*

It is indeed lamentable that even in the 1951 census there was no effort to compile vital statistics in Madhya Bharat. The Census Commissioner of the region was content to admit, "we have in Madhya Bharat neither vital statistics nor complete migration figures".<sup>19</sup> As such, there is no data dealing with birth rates and death rates. Nor are there any previous censuses to fall back upon for the information,<sup>19</sup> except some fertility samples collected in the 1941 census which we have discussed earlier.

### **Movement**

Migration is another factor that affects natural increase or decrease. Complete figures for migration not being available it is not possible to have any detailed discussion on the matter. Only few general comments are being attempted here.

The 1931 Census describes five types of migrations : Casual, Temporary, Periodic, Semi-Permanent and Permanent.<sup>20</sup>

Tribal people are by nature non-migratory. The casual migration among them is due to their wandering in search of wives. This is more so in the Bhil areas where the bride is a costly 'commodity'. In the Saharia belt bride-price is not prevalent and therefore casual migration is much less.

The most important migration among the tribal people is the periodic one. At the time of the ripening of the Rabi crop they go to Malwa plateau. There they work as agricultural labourers harvesting the wheat crop. This supplements their income. This type of migration is common among all the tribes. Another cause of periodic migration is the forest work. Tribal people are recruited by the contractors to do the felling of the forest coupes. In Saharia zone a large number of Saharias migrate to forest areas to work as 'Khairias' (Katcheu manufacturers). Gonds and Korkus, likewise, spend several months in a year outside their village either on forest coupes or road works or on the smiling wheat fields of Malwa.

The 1931 Census results confirm the general non-migratory habits of the tribal people. Among the natural divisions, the Hills show the lowest proportion of immigrants, Dhar district being the lowest in the Hills. The proportion of the district-born works out to 85 per cent in the Plateau, 87 per cent in the Lowland and 94 per cent in the Hills. This shows how disinclined the tribal is to leave his home-village.

In the true sense of the term there is no permanent voluntary migration among the tribal people of the State. They resist every effort to move them to distant places, even for permanent employment. Sometime back the

State Government wanted the Bhils from Nimar to be employed on the Chambal Dam. But despite appalling poverty the Bhils refused to do so. Nothing but great natural calamity seems to spur them to permanent migration. The last such migration occurred in 1899-1900 under the impact of the Great Famine. Many new Bhil and Bhilala settlements were founded in the years following the Famine. Since then they have cleared a good deal of forest land and settled there for good.

### *Sex Ratio*

The sex ratio is a measure of the difference in numbers between the sexes, and it is the number of females per 1,000 males.

The table below gives the sex ratio of the tribal people in 1951:—

TABLE IX  
SEX RATIO IN THE VARIOUS TRIBES OF  
MADHYA BHARAT (1951)

No		Total Population			Number of Females per 1,000 males
		Persons	Males	Females	
1.	Bhil	5,92,583	3,02,629	2,89,954	958
2.	Bhilala	3,13,422	1,59,092	1,54,330	970
3.	Saharia	1,23,557	63,869	59,688	933
4.	Korku	17,138	8,783	8,355	951
5.	Gond	14,112	7,126	6,986	980

In India as a whole the sex ratio was 947 in 1951 and the Central India zone had a sex ratio of 973. The sex ratio in the tribes of Madhya Bharat is not very different from the zonal index, and indicates more or less an equality in the sexes. But if the sex ratio of the tribes in 1951 is compared with the figures for the last 4 Censuses it is found that the ratio had been altogether different 40 years back. The table below gives the comparative data of the sex ratio of the various tribes since 1911:—

TABLE X  
SEX RATIO OF VARIOUS TRIBES FROM 1911 TO 1951

Tribe	Females per 1,000 males				
	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911
1. Bhil	958	963	978	988	1,002
2. Bhilala	970	964	984	984	1,017
3. Saharia	933	960	976	997	950
4. Gond	980	NA	1,018	1,012	1,107
5. Korku	951	NA	NA	NA	NA

(NA = Not Available)

The table indicates that as compared with the statistics of 1911, the proportion of females has declined considerably in all the tribes. This decline is noticeable in every census. The largest fall has been in the case of the Gonds who had a sex ratio of 1,107 in 1911. The sex ratio of the Gonds in 1951 Census stands at 980—the highest in all the tribes. It is apparent that the sex ratio which had been showing a high femininity has been constantly declining. If femininity is taken as a sign of high vitality, the indication is that the vitality of all the tribes is declining. The Bhils had a sex ratio of 1,002 in 1911. This declined to 988 in 1921, 978 in 1931, 963 in 1941 and in 1951 stood at 958. More or less the same pattern is visible in the Bhilalas. The Saharias show a most fluctuating sex ratio—sometimes going up and sometimes going down. In 1911 the ratio was 950. In the next 10 years it increased to 997 and by another decade again declined to 976 and again went declining reaching 933 in 1951. The lowest femininity is discernable in this tribe. Even allowing for some margin of error in the 1921 Census the declining trend of femininity is obvious. The highest femininity is among the Gonds with a sex ratio of 980 in 1951.

This decline in femininity and conversely a rise in masculinity may mean either a lower number of female children born or a higher mortality among them at various stages. In the absence of reliable vital statistics it is difficult to hazard a guess regarding its causes.

### *Household*

The sample survey conducted by the author shows the constitution of the household size among the tribal people in the State. The table below gives the average size of the number of persons in a household of each tribe.

TABLE XI  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS IN A HOUSEHOLD OF  
VARIOUS TRIBES

No.	Tribe	Size of the household		
1	Bhil	...	...	7.4
2	Bhilala	..	...	7.6
3	Saharia	...	...	5.7
4	Korku	.	...	4.2
5	Gond	..	..	5.0

(Source : Sample Survey by the author)

This indicates that the Bhils and the Bhilalas have larger households as compared with other tribes. The Bhilalas with a household size of 7.6 stand first, Bhils with 7.4 coming close second and the Korkus with 4.2 coming last. The Saharias have an average of 5.7 and the Gonds only 5. The Bhilalas and the Bhils have larger families. Both these tribes being overwhelmingly agricultural, perhaps, they find it useful to have larger household. Larger the family the greater is the number of workers in the family farm and greater is the economy. The other three tribes generally being mostly landless, there is perhaps less incentive for a larger family. Tribal customs, larger number of children, dislike for migration in search of employment etc. may be other factors affecting the number of persons per household.

### *Types of Households*

Let us now study the types of households as differentiated by size. The 1951 Indian Census Report has classified and defined these sizes as :

Small household—with 1 to 3 members.

Medium household—with 4 to 6 members..

Large household—with 7 to 9 members.

Very large household—with 10 or more members.

The table below gives the percentages of the household sizes in various tribes :

TABLE XII  
PERCENTAGE OF THE HOUSEHOLD SIZES IN VARIOUS TRIBES

No.	Tribe	Percentage of Household Size			
		Small	Medium	Large	Very Large
1.	Bhil	16.0	31.0	29.0	24.0
2.	Bhilala	9.0	35.0	31.0	25.0
3.	Saharia	15.0	59.0	18.0	8.0
4.	Korku	17.0	60.0	20.0	3.0
5.	Gond	15.0	65.0	15.0	5.0

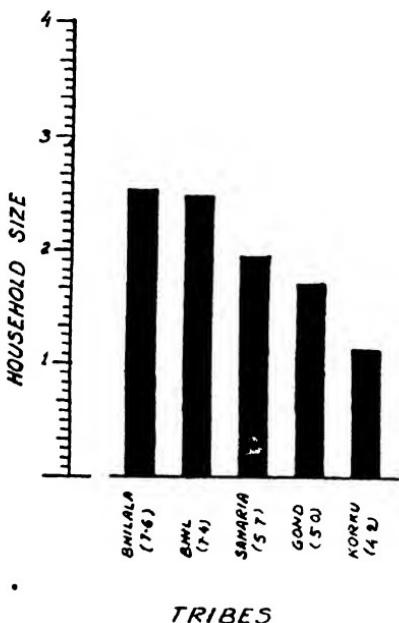
(Source : Sample Survey by the author)

The table indicates that large families are a custom among the Bhils and the Bhilalas, whereas the Saharias, Korkus and the Gonds frown upon very large families. But they are similar in one respect—namely that the percentage of small families is lower in them all. The tribal family has a tendency to veer round the medium to large size of household. This pattern is very different from the All India and the Central India pattern in general.

In the rural areas of India small households are 33 per cent, medium 44 per cent, large 17 per cent and very large 6 per cent. The pattern of Central India zone is similar with small 36 per cent, medium 44 per cent, large 15 per cent and very large 5 per cent.<sup>n</sup>

As compared to the Indian and the Central Indian pattern the tribal household contains a much lesser percentage of small houses. Saharias, Korkus and Gonds come very close to the Indian and Central Indian pattern in respect of large households with a percentage of 18, 20 and 15 respectively. In respect of very large households also these tribes approximate the Indian and the Central Indian

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS  
IN A HOUSEHOLD IN VARIOUS TRIBES



pattern. Their difference lies mainly in fewer small households and more medium households as compared to India and Central India. But the Bhils and Bhilalas present no similarity with the Indian and the Central India pattern. Although the greatest percentage is of the medium households, they are much less than the Indian and Central Indian percentages. Comparatively smaller households are much fewer and larger houses more frequent.

Thus the pattern of tribal household sizes is different from the pattern of India and Central India. At the same time there are differences in the tribes as well. The Bhils and the Bhilalas form one group with a similar pattern. The other group consists of the Saharias, Korkus and Gonds with a similar pattern. The points of similarity and differences within these two groups have already been indicated. These may be summarised as below :

The Indian and the Central Indian pattern, veers round the small and the medium household.

The Bhil and Bhilala pattern has a tendency to have more or less equal weight on medium, large and very large.

The Saharia, Korku and Gond pattern leans overwhelmingly to the medium with small and the large households coming equal seconds.

### *Age Structure*

Before we proceed to discuss the age structure of the tribes in Madhya Bharat it would be necessary to add a word of caution. So far as the age statistics are concerned, Indian data on age have always been regarded as notoriously unreliable. The same holds true of the age statistics in Central India and specifically with regard to the tribal people. These primitive people can rarely count more than ten and have poor recollections of dates and years. Generally they associate important domestic happenings like births and deaths and marriages with some great natural catastrophe. The older people tell their age in terms of periods before or after the 'Chappan ka saal' (the great famine of 1899-1900). The ages of younger people have to be judged by the investigator himself, and checked by a reference to the other happenings and the ages of

other persons in the family. It cannot be denied that what we have by way of age statistics is largely a matter of speculative approximations. This is true not only of Madhya Bharat and India but the whole world.<sup>22</sup> The figures given here are as trustworthy as anybody else's.

Since the 1951 census does not deal with the age structure of the different communities, the author tried to collect information pertaining to this aspect through the sample survey conducted by him.

The table below shows the age structure of the various tribes in Madhya Bharat :

TABLE XIII  
AGE STRUCTURE OF VARIOUS TRIBES

Age-group	Percentage among various tribes					Tribal average of the percentages.
	Bhil	Bhilala	Saharia	Korku	Gond	
Infants and young children (0-4)	15.6	15.0	16.0	11.9	17.0	15.10
Boys and Girls (5-14)	27.1	26.6	27.8	19.0	19.8	24.06
Youngmen and Women (15 to 24)	16.9	15.1	15.9	16.7	13.8	15.68
	18.0	18.3	15.3	16.7	18.8	17.42
Middle aged men and women (35-44)	12.9	10.6	13.2	21.5	17.8	15.20
	5.7	7.4	7.8	11.9	3.9	7.34
Elderly persons (55-64)	2.9	4.7	3.2	2.3	5.9	3.80
(65 & above)	0.9	2.3	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.80

(Source : Sample Survey by the author)

It is observed from the above table that on the whole the general tribal age structure is only very slightly different from the Indian pattern. The table below gives the comparative percentage for India and tribal Madhya Bharat.

TABLE XIV  
AGE STRUCTURE IN INDIA AND TRIBAL MADHYA BHARAT  
COMPARED

Age group	Percentage	
	India	Tribes of M.B.
1 Infants and young children	0—4	13.5 } 38.3
2 Boys and Girls	5—15	24.8 } 24.06 }
3 Youngmen and women	15—24 } 25—34 }	17.4 } 33.0 15.6 } 17.42 }
4 Middle aged men and women	35—44 } 45—54 }	11.9 } 20.4 8.5 } 7.34 }
5 Elderly persons	55—64 65 & above	5.1 } 8.3 3.2 } 0.80 }

The comparative table shows that the average of persons below 15 is slightly higher among the tribals as compared with India as a whole. The percentage of youngmen and women is 33.1 and 33.0 respectively showing no difference. The table shows the percentage of the middle aged men and women among the tribals to be 22.54, whereas the corresponding figure for India is 20.4. This is remarkable, as normally we do not associate high longevity of life among the tribals in this age group. This is largely accounted by the high percentage shown by the Korkus in this group. As the sample for Korkus was very small the figures are not perhaps, typical of the tribe.

In the group of elderly persons the tribal percentage is 4.6 and the corresponding figure for India is 8.3. This shows that the tribal people are less long lived when compared to the general Indian population.

The differences in the Indian pattern and the tribal pattern would be observed better if the age structure of Bhils, Bhilalas and Saharias, whose samples were larger, are compared.

In Bhils the percentage of persons below 15 is 42.7. The size of very young population is obviously much higher here than in India. The Bhilalas have a percentage of 41.6 and the Saharias 43.8 in this group. Thus, all the three above-mentioned tribes show a much higher proportion of very young population.

The percentage of youngmen and women in India is 33.0, compared to that the Bhils have a proportion of 34.9, Bhilalas 33.4, and Saharias 29.2 per cent. The difference is very slight in this group with Bhils and Bhilalas slightly higher and the Saharias very slightly lower in percentage. This shows that whatever be the difference in the earlier group, it is rubbed off by the time youth is reached.

In India the middle aged men and women account for 20.40 per cent of the population. The corresponding figures for Bhils, Bhilalas and Saharias are 18.6, 18.0 and 21.0 respectively. The Bhils and Bhilalas both show a lower percentage in this higher age group, whereas the Saharias show a slightly higher proportion. This indicates that in the Bhils and the Bhilalas by the time the middle age is reached the advantage gained in the earlier age groups is lost. This indicates higher death rate in this age group. The death rate among the Saharias in this age group appears to be lower as the tribe shows a greater strength at this stage.

The difference in the age structure of tribals and the general population becomes clear when the last age group is reached. India shows a percentage of 8.3 in the elderly group. The corresponding figures for the Bhils, Bhilalas and Saharias are 3.8, 7.0 and 2.3 per cent respectively. The

Bhils and the Saharias show very low longevity while the Bhilalas stand at par with the Indian pattern. The higher longevity among the Bhilalas is explained by the fact that as a class they are much better off, and generally live in agriculturally better developed tracts. The Bhil, in contrast, has less land, and poor quality land, and is largely confined to the more hilly and wild areas. Saharia, too, is largely landless with main dependence on forest produce. Thus, rigours of life are harder on these tribes than on the Bhilalas who are fast moving up in the scale of rural hierarchy.

The analysis of the age structure among the tribals shows that the proportion of children is higher and the older people lower as compared with general Indian population. This indicates a higher birth rate and relatively a shorter span of life. This, largely seems to have been the pattern in the past as well. The 1931 Census remarks, "the tribals have the largest proportion of children, are relatively short lived and have the lowest mean age".<sup>24</sup>

### *Civil Condition*

Marriage is universal in the tribes of Madhya Bharat. It is such an important institution in the tribal communities that they have evolved several forms of marriage to get over various social and economical practices prohibiting or delaying marriage in the normal course. In the Bhils and the Bhilalas bride price (*dahej-dapa*) forms a very important condition of marriage. Poorer people find it difficult to meet the financial burdens of regular marriage. They take recourse to marriage by capture or mutual consent which prove less costly. They have also evolved the custom of Matrilocal marriage known as *ghar jamai* where husband lives with the parents of his wife for a stipulated period. Among the Gonds and the Korkus bride-price is no consideration and marriage is relatively a less expensive affair. The same applies to the Saharias.

The survey shows the following marital state among the tribes :

TABLE XV  
PROPORTION OF MARRIED PERSONS IN THE  
TRIBES OF MADHYA BHARAT

No.	Tribe	Percentage of married persons
1	Bhil	44.3
2	Bhilala	46.7
3	Saharia	37.2
4	Korku	57.0
5	Gond	58.4
	All tribes	48.7

The table shows that the Gonds\* and the Korkus have the highest proportion of married persons with 58.4 and 57 per cent of married persons respectively. The Bhils and the Bhilalas come next with 44.3 and 46.7 per cent respectively. The Saharias come last with a low percentage of 37.2. The tribal people in general show a married percentage of 48.7.

The proportion of married people in the tribal communities appears to be much below the India average. In India (1951) only 44.1 per cent of the population is unmarried. In the Central India the proportion is the lowest with 41.1 per cent unmarried. The wide diversity between the Indian average of the married and the tribal average of married is perhaps due to the fact that child marriage even now is prevalent in the Hindu castes. The tribals as a rule have a much lower percentage of child marriages. Hinduization has slowly affected the tribal groups by making child marriage more prevalent.<sup>\*\*</sup> For the tribes trying to get accepted as Hindu castes the temptation of child marriage has always been great. But even then it must be much lower in the tribals than among the caste Hindus.

### *Widows and Widowers*

The tribes of Madhya Bharat have a general custom of widow remarriage known as *natra*. This reduces the number of widows and widowers in the tribal communities.

The table below shows the percentage of widows and widowers in the tribes of the State:

TABLE XVI  
PERCENTAGE OF WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS IN THE  
TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

No.	Tribe	Percentage of widows in the Population.	Percentage of widowers in the Population.
1	Bhil	3.0	1.3
2	Bhilala	2.1	2.2
3	Saharia	2.4	0.3
4	Korku	2.4	1.2
5	Gond	1.9	2.0
All tribes		2.36	1.4

Generally speaking the proportion of widows is higher than the proportion of widowers in almost all the tribes. The widows form 2.36 per cent of the total tribal population, whereas the widowers form only 1.4 per cent. It may be attributed to the following causes:-

- (a) It is easier for the widower to find a mate than for a widow to do so due to economic causes. Hence fewer widowers in the community.
- (b) Tribal women tend to live longer than the tribal males as the tribal man works harder than the woman.

With reference to the problem of widows and widowers in general the proportion is much lower than in India in general. The Bhils have the largest proportion of widows and Bhilalas the widowers. The least number of widows is among the Gonds where incidentally widowers are more than widows. The difference between widows and widowers is the least in the Bhilalas which is socially and economically the most advanced tribe of the State.

## CHAPTER IV

### PATTERN OF LIVING AND LIVELIHOOD

#### PATTERN OF LIVING—IN THE PAST

The tribal communities in Madhya Bharat have gone through a good deal of change in their pattern of living in the last hundred years or so. Before we proceed to discuss their pattern of living and livelihood today, it would be profitable to know what they were in the past —how they made their living and what type of life they led.

After the ruthless treatment meted out to the Bhils by the Marathas, they had become lawless and restless. Relentless persecution and the loss of hereditary lands led them into a life of robbery and plunder. When things settled down they gave up plundering and took to more peaceful and legal pursuits. After the change they became mainly hunters and food-gatherers. The Imperial Gazetteer (1908) records that they are the “hunters and woodmen, but now grow a little rice or maize to eke out their diet of game, roots and fruits, and keep goats and fowls for feasts and sacrifices. In times of difficulty, they will eat beef, but not the horse, rat, snake or monkey”!

Erskine, writing at about the same time, divided the Bhils into three main classes according to their mode of living.<sup>3</sup> These he denominated as the village, the cultivating and the wild or the mountain Bhils. The village Bhils were those who “from ancient residence or chance, have become inhabitants of villages in the plains (though usually near the hills), of which they are the watchmen and are incorporated as a portion of the community”. The second class consisted of those who had continued in their peaceful occupations after their leaders were destroyed or driven by invaders to become desperate free-booters. The third class comprised of that part of the tribe which “preferring savage freedom and indolence to submis-

sion and industry, had continued more or less to subsist by plunder".<sup>4</sup>

As conditions became more peaceful and settled, the Bhils, as well as the Korkus and the Gonds took to their old peaceful pursuits. Generally, they preferred the rugged hills and wild forests. Besides hunting and food-gathering they cleared forest patches and practised *dhya* (shifting) cultivation. In the north the Saharias, who were equally deprived of land and driven into the wilds, did the same. This system of cultivation led to absence of stable settlements and the temporary nature of tribal hamlets.<sup>5</sup> Whether the tribal lived in the forests and practised shifting cultivation or lived on the periphery of civilization and sweated for the so-called advanced people, he always acted as a pioneer in the advance of the civilized against the terrifying wilderness. This role of pioneer he played with silent heroism only to yield the advantage of his toils to the unscrupulous plainsmen. Forsyth caustically remarks, "his (tribal's) lack of thrift, and hatred of being long settled in a locality as certainly ensure the fruits of his labour reverting as a permanency to the settled races of the plains".<sup>6</sup>

In 1901 the traditional occupation of the Scheduled Tribes were:<sup>7</sup>

Bhil : Hunting and collecting jungle produce.

Bhilala : Agriculture.

Saharia: Hunting and collecting of jungle produce.

Korku : Hunting and collecting jungle produce.

Gond : Hunting and agriculture.

But all these tribes practised several occupations not strictly within the scope of the traditional occupations. In again a shift in occupations. This is discernible in the course of time this scope widened. And slowly there was occupational break-down of the Bhils, Bhilalas and Gonds in 1921.<sup>8</sup>

TABLE I  
OCCUPATION OF SELECTED TRIBES IN 1921

Sr. No.	Occupation	Number per 1000 workers engaged on each occupation		
		Bhil	Bhilala	Gond
1	Agriculture	627	850	666
2	Field labourers, wood cutting etc.	175	108	199
3	Raisers of stock, milkmen and herdsmen	18	9	14
4	Artisans and other workmen	1	—	—
5	Public Force	6	—	—
6	Public Administration	12	3	—
7	Domestic service	23	3	8
8	Labour (unspecified)	114	26	98
9	Beggars, prostitutes and criminals	2	—	4
10	Trade	—	—	4
11	Others	22	4	9

The table shows that with the passage of years agriculture had become the principal occupation of the overwhelming section of the tribal people. Even Bhils who were not recorded as agriculturists in 1901, had now taken to agriculture in substantially large numbers. The next in importance came labour. Other occupations provided sustenance to a very small fraction of the working population.

The pattern of tribal livelihood, more or less, crystallized on the lines discussed above. In the 1931 census the same pattern was discernible with only slight change in the proportion of persons engaged in each occupation. The Central India in general showed a high percentage of agricultural population. But the states in the Bhil country showed the highest proportions. In the overwhelmingly Bhil States of Alirajpur, Barwani and Jhabua agriculture accounted for 92, 85 and 90 per cent of working population respectively.<sup>9</sup> These percentages are for mixed population: for purely tribal populations these percentages must have been even higher.

This brief history of the livelihood pattern of the tribal population in Central India indicates that the tribals are late arrivals on the stage of settled agriculture. This means two things. Being late to take to agriculture, the tribals have only the worst of the lands available to them for cultivation. Not being traditional agriculturists they are not so very skilled in the art of agriculture. These consequences of late conversion from hunting and fruit gathering stage to the agricultural stage have handicapped the tribal from the very start.

### *Pattern of Livelihood*

The 1951 Census divided the population into two broad livelihood classes—the Agricultural classes and the Non-agricultural classes. These two heads have further been subdivided as follows:—

1. Agricultural classes (including dependents):
  - I Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned,
  - II Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned,
  - III Cultivating labourers,
  - IV Non-cultivating owners of land; agricultural rent receivers.
  
2. Non-agricultural classes (including dependents):
  - I Production (other than cultivation),
  - II Commerce,
  - III Transport,
  - IV Other services and Miscellaneous sources.

On the basis of this classification adopted for the 1951 Census, it is seen that 72.2 per cent of the general population of Madhya Bharat is directly dependent for its livelihood on agriculture. The remainder or 27.8 per cent is dependent on non-agricultural pursuits. The occupational distribution of the tribal people in the state is given below:—

TABLE II  
 TRIBAL POPULATION DEPENDENT ON AGRICULTURAL  
 AND NON-AGRICULTURAL CLASSES  
 IN MADHYA BHARAT

Total Population	Population dependent on Agriculture (all classes)	Percentage of Population dependent on Agriculture to Total	Population dependent on Non-Agricultural Agricultural classes	Percentage of Non-Agricultural cultural classes to Total
10,60,812	10,14,028	95.58	46,784	4.42

1951 Census (Paper No. 4)

The table shows that the tribal population dependent on agriculture for its livelihood is 95.58 per cent of the total tribal population. The rest, merely 4.42 per cent, is supported by other occupations. When these figures are compared with the figures for the whole India they present a very interesting picture.

TABLE III  
 PATTERN OF LIVELIHOOD IN INDIA AND MADHYA BHARAT  
 (GENERAL) AND TRIBAL MADHYA BHARAT (1951)

	Percentage of Population dependent on Agriculture.	Percentage of Population dependent on Non-agricultural pursuits.
India (General)	69.8	30.2
Madhya Bharat (General)	72.2	27.8
Tribal Population of Madhya Bharat	95.58	4.42

This comparison shows that agriculture is the primary source of livelihood of the tribal people in the State, and the tribal economy is overwhelmingly agricultural. And this transformation has come about in a short span of less than half a century. It makes a very interesting contrast with the pattern of India and Madhya Bharat in general.

The percentage of the general population of India dependent on agricultural classes was 69.8. The general population of Madhya Bharat had a percentage 72.2 dependent on agriculture. Whereas the tribal population of Madhya Bharat had 95.58 per cent depending on this livelihood class. This indicates that as compared with the general population, the tribal population is more strongly agricultural.

If the tribal population of the State is compared with the tribal population of India as a whole and the Central India zone, the general pattern of tribal livelihood becomes more evident. The table below gives the comparative figures for the agricultural and non-agricultural classes pertaining to the total tribal population in India and the total tribal population of Central India zone:

TABLE IV  
COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF TRIBAL POPULATION OF INDIA, CENTRAL INDIA AND MADHYA BHARAT DEPENDENT ON AGRICULTURAL AND NON-AGRICULTURAL CLASSES (1951)

	Percentage of Population dependent on Agricultural classes.	Percentage of Population dependent on Non-agricultural classes.
India (Tribal)a	90.47	9.53
Central India		
Zone* (Tribal)	95.41	4.59
Madhya Bharat		
(Tribal)	95.58	4.42

The table shows that the tribal population of Madhya Bharat has the greatest agricultural bias as compared to the Indian and the Central Indian tribal pattern. The Indian (tribal) dependence on agriculture is 90.47% and non-agricultural 9.53%. Coming down to the Central India zone it is observed that the strength of the agricultural classes is 95.41 per cent—4.94 per cent more than the Indian

This zone comprises of the 'States of Madhya Bharat, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh and Hyderabad (1951).

pattern. Madhya Bharat, forming a part of this zone, has slightly higher percentage in the agricultural class.

It is obvious from the above discussion that whereas the tribal people in India as a whole are more dependent on agriculture than the general population, this dependence on agriculture is even greater in the tribals of the Central India zone and greatest among the tribes of Madhya Bharat. And, it is a fact that comparatively the highlands of Central India are still largely isolated and unconnected with the rest of the country. The resultant backwardness and lack of diversification is, therefore, even more pronounced in Madhya Bharat.

### *Agricultural Classes*

The population dependent on Agricultural classes is further divided into four sub-classes. The table below gives the distribution of tribal population over various sub-classes:

TABLE V  
THE DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBAL POPULATION OVER  
AGRICULTURAL CLASSES (1951)

Livelihood Class.*	Total Population including dependents	Percentage to total population
<b>1. Agricultural</b>		
(I) Owner cultivator	7,37,742	69.54
(II) Tenant-cultivator	1,16,880	11.02
(III) Agricultural labourer	1,55,123	14.62
(IV) Rentier	4,283	0.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,14,028</b>	<b>95.58</b>

\* As defined by 1951 Census.

The table shows that of the total tribal population nearly 70 per cent are owner cultivators.<sup>10</sup> The corresponding figure for the general population of Madhya Bharat is little over 50 per cent.

This means that more tribals own the land that they cultivate. The agricultural labour accounts for 14.62 per

cent of the tribal population, whereas only 10.7 per cent of the total general population of the State is agricultural labour. Thus owner cultivators and agricultural labourers, both are more abundant among the tribals. The rentier class is merely 0.4 per cent among the tribals whereas in the general population of the State it is 0.8 per cent. Due to abolition of Jagirdari and Zamindari, more land has passed into the hands of the cultivators.

### *Non-Agricultural Classes*

The persons dependent on non-agricultural pursuits are given below:—

TABLE VI  
TRIBAL POPULATION DEPENDENT ON NON-AGRICULTURAL  
CLASSES (1951)

Livelihood Class <sup>11</sup>	Total Population including dependents	Percentage of total
<b>2. Non-agricultural</b>		
(V) Industry	21,311	2.01
(VI) Commerce	3,368	0.32
(VII) Transport	711	0.07
(VIII) Others	21,384	2.02
Total	46,774	4.42
Grand Total	10,60,802	100

The table shows that the tribal population depends very little on other pursuits for its livelihood. Industry (class v), which includes forestry and stock raising, supports only 2 per cent of the total tribal population. As a matter of fact, forestry provides a very important source of supplementary income in the tribal economy. But as a principal source of livelihood, it is relegated to the background. The extremely low percentage of population dependent on commerce indicates that there is very little by way of diversification of occupations. In the tribal areas there is very little of trade and commerce. The whole economy is

of a subsistence type. The marketable surplus is neither varied nor large. Whatever trade and commerce is there it is in the hands of the hereditary trading classes of *Banias* and *Bohras*. Transport is another occupation not well developed in the tribal areas. Partly the topography, and partly the history of these areas accounts for the unopened nature of the tribal country. Service class provides employment to 2.02 per cent of the tribal population. The corresponding figure for the general population of the State is 11.1 per cent. Heavy rural bias and extremely low percentage of literacy among the tribals accounts for so little dependence on services.

Thus the pattern of livelihood is overwhelmingly rural and agricultural among the tribal people. The almost total dependence on agriculture, with little diversification, indicates a very backward economy.

The above is the general tribal pattern in the State. As regards the particular tribes, 1951 Census does not throw any light on their pattern. The sample survey conducted by the author gives some indication of this pattern. The facts thus observed are being given below for what they are worth. Generally these facts indicate the same pattern common to all, with slight variations due to regional and local causes.

### *Bhils :*

The Bhils covered by the sample survey showed that 86 per cent had some land to cultivate and 14 per cent who had no land worked as agricultural labourers. Thus the main source of livelihood was agriculture. As a secondary or supplementary source of livelihood forestry got the pride of place. Cultivators and labourers alike lean on the forests to supplement their meagre incomes.

### *Bhilalas :*

The Bhilalas show a higher percentage of cultivating owners with 90 per cent having some sort of tenure. 2 per cent had no land of their own and worked as agricultural labourers as *Halis*, and in other capacities. The rest 8 per

cent of the landless worked as unspecified labour, taking any work that came their way. This included road-labour, stone breaking, house repairing, etc.

### *Saharias :*

The Saharias have a large proportion of the landless. The Zamindari<sup>12</sup> and the Jagirdari<sup>13</sup> systems prevalent in this part of the State over a long period resulted in the alienation of land from the hands of the Saharias. The pattern of livelihood takes a different shape here as compared to the Ryotwari tracts of the Scheduled Areas where the Bhils and the Bhilalas live. The largest dependence for livelihood here is on labour. This accounts for 68 percent of the persons. The number of those who have some kind of tenure is only 32 per cent. Since the abolition of Zamindari and Jagirdari in the State the position should have eased. But by a clever piece of manoeuvre the retiring Jagirdars and Zamindars managed to auction their land to contractors for long terms. These contractors known as *chakdars* replaced the Jagirdars and Zamindars in every sense of the term. Thus, despite constitutional and legal changes in the ownership of land, Saharias continue to be landless, exploited and oppressed, working as *mahidars* (attached agricultural labour) on the holdings of the caste Hindus, Kiraras, Lodhis and Mahajans.

Saharia depends largely on forestry as a supplementary source of livelihood, like his southern cousins, the Bhils and the Bhilalas.

### *Korkus :*

Among the Korkus the number of landless is very large. Only 25 per cent people have land of their own. The rest 75 per cent depend on unspecified labour.

### *Gonds :*

The Gonds too, inhabiting the same tracts, have a high percentage of unspecified labour. 70 per cent of the population is landless and floating. Only 30 per cent has land. Korkus and Gonds are, really speaking, mainly labourers

Thus, agriculture has a secondary place in their scheme of life.

### Rural-Urban :

The proportion of rural and urban population indicates the pressure of population on land. India in general shows a very high degree of ruralization with nearly 83 per cent of the population living in the rural areas. Thus, eight out of every ten Indians, live in the rural areas.

The tribal population is even more rural in character. The following table gives the figures of Scheduled Tribes living in rural and urban areas :

TABLE VII  
RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION OF THE SCHEDULED TRIBES IN 1961

	Total Tribal Population	Total Rural Population	Percent age of Rural Population to total	Total Urban Population	Percent age of Urban Population to total
India	19,116,948	18,641,212	97.51	465,470	2.43
Central India zone	4,370,165	4,331,038	99.10	39,127	0.89
Madhya Bharat	1,060,812	1,052,387	99.21	8,427	0.79

(Source : Census of India, Paper No. 4, Special Groups 1951 Census).

The above table shows that the tribal population is overwhelmingly rural in character. Only 83 per cent of the general population of India lives in villages. Whereas the corresponding figure for the tribal population of India is 97.51 per cent. The same pattern of living is observed in the Central India Zone, but the tribal population here is even more rural, with a percentage of 99.10. The tribal population of Madhya Bharat is 99.2 per cent rural, which shows a greater degree of ruralization as compared with the Tribal India and the Central India Zone (tribal). This means that the pressure on land is highest in the tribal

areas of the State. Merely 8,427 or 0.79 per cent of the tribal population of the State lives in the urban areas.

Looking at the rate of the growth of the rural population in the three natural divisions of the State it is observed that urbanization is having no effect on the Hills division. The rural population of the division in 1921 was 91.7 per cent, in 1931 it was 92.2 per cent, in 1941 it was 91.8 per cent and 1951 it was 91.2 per cent. It can safely be concluded from these figures that there has been an appreciable increase in the rural character of the tribal population of the State and instead of diminishing, ruralization is constantly increasing.

The various tribes of the State show equally high degree of ruralization. The table below gives the distribution of the tribes between rural and urban areas in 1951:

TABLE VIII  
RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION OF THE VARIOUS  
TRIBES OF MADHYA BHARAT

Total Population of the Tribe	Total Rural Population	Percen- tage of Rural Popula- tion to total	Total Urban Population	Percen- tage of Urban Popula- tion to total
<b>All Tribes in Madhya Bharat</b>				
Bharat	10,60,812	10,52,387	99.2	8,427 0.79
Bhil	5,92,583	5,87,413	99.12	5,170 0.88
Bhilala	3,13,422	3,12,296	99.64	1,126 0.36
Saharia	1,23,557	1,21,834	98.61	1,723 1.31
Korku	17,138	17,127	99.93	11 0.07
Gond	14,112	13,717	97.20	395 2.80

(Source: District Handbooks, 1951 Census)

Of the tribes of Madhya Bharat Korkus are the most rural in character with 99.93 per cent of population living in villages. Next come Bhilalas with 99.64 per cent and Bhils 99.12 per cent of rural population. The Gonds stand last in the scale with 97.2 per cent rural population.

Relatively, therefore, highest urbanization occurs among the Gonds with a percentage of 2.8. The Saharias come next with a percentage of 1.31. The Gonds and the Saharias have a higher percentage of landless among them. Since their attachment to land is less they move to nearby towns in search of employment as labourers and domestic servants. The Bhilalas and the Bhils on the other hand have a great stake in land, in one way or the other, and therefore they have less inclination and incentive to move to the towns. However, this difference between the tribes is very small. The general pattern continues to be one of overwhelmingly rural habitation.

#### *Rural-Urban—by Sex*

As a rule the percentage of women in rural areas is much higher than in the urban areas. This is true of all the tribes in the State with the sole exception of the Gonds. Of the total rural population of the Bhils 51.06 per cent are males and 48.94 per cent females. In urban areas the proportion undergoes a change with 52.26 per cent males and 47.74 per cent females, showing fewer women in the urban areas.

In case of the Bhilalas the difference is more pronounced. In rural areas the males constitute 50.72 per cent of the Bhilala population and females 49.28 per cent. But in the urban areas the male percentage increases to 60.48 with females only 39.52.

The Saharias have 51.56 per cent males and 48.44 per cent females in the rural areas. Here too, as in the case of Bhilalas, the percentage of males in urban areas goes very high with 61.0 per cent males and 39.00 per cent females.

Among the Korkus 51.23 per cent of the rural population consists of males and 48.77 per cent females. In urban areas the males have a percentage of 72.72 and females 27.28. Korkus show the least percentage of famles in the urban areas.

Among the Gonds the males account for 50.51 per cent of the rural Gond population and females 49.49 per cent.

In urban areas the males constitute 49.87 per cent of the Gond population with females constituting 50.13 per cent. Gonds are the only tribe in the State where the proportion of females in urban areas is higher as compared to the rural areas.

These figures show that fewer females like to move to towns as compared to males. The reason, perhaps, lies in the fact that when a tribal goes to the town in search of livelihood he prefers not to carry his womenfolk there. His intention generally is to return to his village when the economic expediency is over. The rural home, therefore, is generally not disturbed. And, large number of women continue to maintain these homes, awaiting the return of their husbands and other men-folk.

## CHAPTER V

### AGRICULTURE AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

#### *Shifting Cultivation :*

Prior to the present settled agriculture that is found in the tribes today, the most popular method of growing crops in the tribal areas used to be shifting cultivation or axe cultivation. This is quite natural as shifting cultivation marks a stage of transition from hunting and food gathering to settled agriculture.

Shifting cultivation was practised by the Bhil in the south as well as the Saharia in the north. It must have continued since times immemorial, particularly among the Saharias. B. C. Mazumdar tells us. "It appears that the Savara-kol people in the highlands of central India used sticks for a long time for digging the soil and only at a comparatively later date introduced the plough for agricultural purposes".<sup>1</sup> Shifting cultivation continued to be practised on small-scale in the southern part of the State till about the mid-forties, though not openly. As late as 1943 shifting cultivation was detected in Alirajpur (Jhabua district) in small patches.<sup>2</sup> Shifting cultivation was also widely practised in Karwada (Jhabua district) till about 1930, when it was stopped by the Ruler.<sup>3</sup> But surreptitiously the practice continues even today and it is still a serious menace to proper forest management.<sup>4</sup> But from the broad economic point of view the practice is a very minor one and does not constitute any topic of serious study.

Conditions among the Saharias are very different. They live mostly in the reserve forests or villages very close to them. In the absence of suitable land for cultivation due to competition from caste Hindus, and lack of other gainful sources of employment, they fall an easy prey to the temptation of shifting cultivation or *suradahiya*, as they call it. Among the Saharias shifting cultivation was very common until 1908 and "good forest crop

was cut down and burnt to raise a crop or two of *tilli* (*sesamum indicum*) and *jowar* (*sorghum vulgare*)". With the tightening of the forest administration the *dahya* cultivation has diminished very considerably. It still occurs here and there but when detected by forest authorities it is severely punished. The process of cultivation is briefly as follows:

A suitable sloping land is selected on the hill side. The forest trees are cut down with an axe and burnt. The ashes are spread all over the field. After allowing the land to cool down, holes are dug at soft points in the soil with the help of a steel-pointed stick known as *khoria*. Then seeds, chiefly of *jowar*, are placed in these holes and covered with soil. *Ramasa*, *rotka* and other small millets are also grown this way. The land yields 4 to 5 maunds of *jowar* per acre.

This practice is being severely discouraged, and tribals all over the State are being settled on land. This has largely been achieved in the south, and Bhils and Bhilalas can now be termed as settled agriculturists. Gonds and Korkus are now largely employed as labourers on lands and forests, and whatever agriculture persists in them is mainly settled. The Saharia has little land and great love for shifting cultivation. Efforts are being made to give him the first preference in the allotment of new land. By far and large there is no shifting cultivation economy in the primitive tribes of the State. The dependence is always on the settled agriculture. Thus it can be said that in the course of last half a century or so, the tribal people in the State have made a transition from shifting cultivation to settled agriculture. For all practical purposes shifting cultivation is a thing of the past and whatever interest persists in the subject now is largely historical.

#### *Settled Agriculture in the Tribal Belts :*

In the following pages it is proposed to discuss the various aspects of settled agriculture as it is found in the tribal areas of the State. For the sake of convenience the

discussion shall be confined to the conditions in the areas where the tribals live and these areas may be designated as the tribal belts to distinguish them from the broad natural divisions. The Bhil-Bhilala belt would be the same as the Scheduled Areas of the State confined to the Hills division. The Gond-Korku belt would refer to the Kannod, Khategaon and Bagli tehsils of the district Dewas on the hilly section of Plateau division. The Saharia belt would refer to the tehsil Morena of the Lowland division and the tehsils of Shivpuri, Guna and Bhilsa on the north and north-east of the Plateau division.

### THE LAND

#### *Soil Zones :*

Broadly speaking there are five main soil zones in Madhya Bharat. The first is the Alluvial zone comprising of the districts of Gwalior, Bhind and Morena. The soil is alluvial or sandy loam, very similar to the Agra, Etawah and Jhansi districts of the Uttar Pradesh. This zone is devoted mostly to wheat and rice, and where irrigation is plenty, to cash crops like potatoes and sugar-cane. The second is the Light Black Soil zone comprising the districts of Shivpuri, Guna and Bhilsa. This zone forms a sort of bridge between the alluvial zone of the north and heavy black cotton soil of the Malwa Plateau, and has characteristics marking it out from both of them. This is a rich wheat area. The third is the Heavy Black Cotton zone comprising of the most of Plateau division growing cash crops like cotton and groundnuts and important grain crops like wheat and jowar. The fourth zone may be termed as the Nimar zone consisting of shallow black soil. This zone extends over a thin strip of land between the Vindhya and the Satpura ranges, running along the Narmada river. It is an alluvial of very high fertility and highly suited to the cultivation of cotton and groundnut. And finally we have the Hilly zone covering most of the districts of Nimar and Jhabua and parts of the district Dhar.

### *Tribal Area Soils :*

It has been discussed earlier that the tribal population is heavily concentrated in the hilly areas of the various natural divisions and the three tribal belts are spread over the Vindhya and Satpuras and their numerous offshoots. Therefore, despite the soil zone they may be broadly classed in, they have for their sustenance the hilly soils. The Saharias, for instance, though living in the alluvial and light black soil zones, have mostly stony and hilly soils as their holdings. The Gonds and Korkus, similarly, inhabit the most infertile parts of Dewas district. So far as the Bhil belt is concerned it is over-whelmingly dependent on the hilly soils. Therefore, it is the last zone that is practically omnipresent in the three tribal belts of the State.

These hilly soils are laterites and laterities. These soils are deficient in potash, phosphoric acid and lime.<sup>1</sup> On higher levels these soils are exceedingly thin and gravelly, but on lower levels and in the valleys they consist of heavy loams and clays. On the whole these soils are very poor. These soils are equally poor in nitrogen and humus. Their capacity to retain moisture and nutrients is also severely limited.<sup>2</sup> These soils occur on the summit of the Vindhyan and Satpura hills throughout the State. Thus, whatever be the distances separating one tribal belt from another the tribal areas have the same type of soil throughout.

### *Bhil Belt :*

But within these belts also there is a wide variety of soils—from most fertile to the most rocky ones. *Bhuri*, *Halki* and *Khardi* are the more common ones with occasionally the *Kali* thrown in between. This variety is due to the hilly terrain of the country. The rocky substratum plays a very important part in creating this variety. Hills, stony ridges, rivers, streams and nals leave their own mark on the soil types. In these hilly areas the value of a soil depends largely on its depth, while in the plains the intrinsic quality of the soil is the prime determining factor.

Where the rocky substratum is thickly over-laid with soil the soil is deeper and has greater power of retaining moisture. Due to the undulating nature of the terrain, the surface run-off during the rains is very large, resulting in excessive soil erosion. The fields on top of the hills and on the slope of the hills get denuded of rich silt. Near the nallas and rivers a good part of this silt gets deposited creating fertile valleys and banks rich in alluvium.

The *Khardi* is a red soil with little depth and poor retention. The *Halki* is relatively a poorer soil having rocks very close to the surface. And finally there is the *Bardi*, the poorest of the poor soils. It is shallow and stony.

These soils can retain moisture for very short periods. This shallowness has been brought out very picturesquely in a tribal phrase. Said a Bhilala cultivator to the author, "My soils, Sir, are thin, and even moonlight is sufficient to parch them up." They are suitable for shallow rooted kharif crops only which do not require much moisture for their growth and whose life span is shorter. We have therefore the risky spectacle of the Bhil and Bhilala cultivator of the hills sowing his maize soon after the first break of the monsoon as early as the last week of May. He does this to secure two rain fed crops counting on the average rain during the monsoons and liberal dose during the winter. *Khardi* can grow jowar, bajra and makka. *Bardi* is suitable for small millets like kodon, savan, kulthi etc.—the typical dry crops of the draught areas. These crops yield food for the human being as well as the cattle.

#### *Saharia Belt :*

The soils in the Saharia belt are subject to the same variability as in the southern Hills. The main types in these areas are *Padua*, *Bhura*, *Dumat*, *Rankar* and occasionally the *Mar*. *Padua* is a greyish sandy soil. The *Bhura* is a yellow coloured soil suitable for small millets and other small grains. The *Rankar* is the stony soil found in most of the areas known as *Tarahti Dang* situated on the foot of the Vindhyan Hills. This soil like its counterpart the *Bardi* of the Bhil areas is very shallow and subject

to quick exhaustion. It can be cultivated only once in three years.<sup>9</sup> The sowing on *Rankar* is very early in order to make the best use of the moisture. In the tribal economy of the belt it is the *Rankar* that plays the most important role.

### *Gond-Korku Belt :*

The tribal people occupy the north-west and south-west of the Nemawar part of the Dewas district comprising of the tehsils of Kannod, Khategaon and Bagli. These parts are hilly and of little fertility. The level and fertile plains of the centre and the east are comparatively more fertile. In the hilly tracts only kharif crops are raised. Small millets like *kodon*, and *savan* are the staple crops on the hilly soils which have the same characteristics as those of the hills in the south.

### *Soil Erosion :*

The soils of these submontane tracts are subject to heavy erosion.<sup>10</sup> The slope being very steep, the surface run-off of the rain water during the monsoons constitutes the greatest eroding factor. Due to excessive run-off surface soil disappears and the soluble chemicals are bleached out. The rich humus bearing top soil gets washed off, and rocky and raw sub-soil is continually exposed. This raw sub-soil gets little time to mature and become efficient in cropping capacity.<sup>11</sup> Dr Higginbottom had estimated a loss of twenty to fifty tons per acre of the top soil of the fields in central India.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of individual income and national wealth the loss would amount to crores of rupees annually. In the context of tribal economy this excessive denudation poses a serious socio-economic problem. It results in lower soil fertility which means less yield per acre and less income per cultivator. Finally, it results in poverty for the majority of the tribal cultivators. Their economic position worsens and moneylender's grip becomes tighter. Evil social consequences follow this destitution.

To a certain extent soil erosion is a beneficial process. Our soils are a result of this process over a long period.

According to Jacks and Whyte 'geological erosion' or 'denudation' is a process necessary for soil formation.<sup>13</sup> History of civilization is largely a history of the foot or two of the top soil that gives the man and animal his sustenance. But when "the same process is accelerated by human mismanagement, it becomes one of the vicious and destructive forces that have ever been released by man".<sup>14</sup> This destruction threatens not only the well-being but the very existence of the tribal people.

The question that arises is not one of putting a stop to soil erosion but of reducing it. What is actually required is "an equilibrium between soil denudation and soil formation".<sup>15</sup> If that is achieved the problem of soil fertility and soil stability would become easy to solve.

#### *Contributory Causes :*

Besides the topographical and climatic factors causing erosion there are other important factors that have helped in the acceleration of this destructive process.

In the Bhil belt in the Hills division the large number of cattle results in serious grazing of the land. Particularly the goats prove most destructive. They eat every bit of greenery that they sight. Even the young sprouts are eaten, and new vegetation hardly gets a chance of survival. This excessive grazing deprives the soil of invaluable binding material that may hold the soil together and check the surface run-off.

The tribal cultivator loves to run his plough up and down the slopes of his field. This he would do, even at the cost of the life of his bullocks. This method of ploughing against the contour and along the slope, provides easy channel for rain water to run-off at great speed. This further increases the rate of denudation.

And finally, there is the factor of increasing pressure of population on land. Decrease in the size of holdings due to subdivision and fragmentation in successive generations now does not allow much land to lie fallow. Every tenant tries to use every bit of land in his tiny holding. In the past, fallow and uncultivated land used to be quite considerable and such covered land always protected the

soil against excessive erosion. The reduction in fallows and uncultivated patches has further hastened 'the process of erosion. The smaller gets the average size of holding the greater the soil erosion.

### *Erosion and Agronomic Improvements :*

It is generally not fully realized that in the face of excessive soil erosion agronomic improvements by surface treatment would either fail altogether or succeed only very partially.<sup>16</sup> No addition of manures would be of any avail because frequently its effect would be "negatived in the same season or another" depending on its topography." The maintenance of equilibrium in the soil erosion, thus, becomes the pre-condition of improvements in the quality of crops and yields per acre.

' The soil erosion can be checked by following measures: Contour bunding, contour ploughing, provision of storm-water channels, regulation of grazing and better crop rotation.

These measures of preventing soil erosion would require for their success some sort of joint land management. Small and scattered holdings do not lend themselves to proper contour bunding and scientific crop rotation.

### *Rainfall :*

The rainfall, together with soil and temperature, determines the nature of the agricultural industry. Rain water dissolves the salts and other nutrients present in the soil, and the plant utilizes these nutrients in solution form. The region being hilly, climate dry and hot, and the facilities of irrigation almost non-existent, the only source of water to the plant is through the rains. This importance of the rains to the agriculture is realized by the tribal cultivator. He wisely says, "jaeso, barsego, waiso pakego (if it rains well, it will grow well)".

The tribal folk, ignorant of the meteorological science, have, through observation and tradition, built up a vast

store of sayings bearing on the forecast of the rains. The Jhabua Bhil has a saying that if a particular type of cloud known as *Garab* is seen overhead in Bhadawa (August-September) then it must rain in *jeth* (May-June), believing that the cloud would require nine months to mature into a water bearing cloud. If the *Titahri* lays its eggs on the river bank, the rain is likely to be deficient; if it lays eggs on some high place the rains would be plentiful. If a peacock cries before dawn on the third *Vaisakh*, it is considered to be a sign promising as many months of rains as there are cries. The bathing of sparrows in the dust is taken as an indication of the stoppage of rains. These sayings have secured a deep niche in the thinking of the tribal cultivator and he plans his operations very much on the predictions obtained from such signs and omens. The science of weather forecast has yet to reach the tribal people.

From the point of view of rainfall, the census of India has divided the country into five belts<sup>8</sup>:

<i>Rainfall belt</i>	<i>Annual Rainfall</i>
1. Blue belt	Exceeding 75 inches
2. Dark-green belt	Between 50 and 75 inches
3. Light-green belt	Between 30 and 50 inches
4. Brown belt	Between 15 and 30 inches
5. Yellow belt	Below 15 inches

All the three tribal belts of Madhya Bharat fall in the Brown belt, generally averaging less than 30 inches of rains annually. The special feature of the Brown belt is frequent seasonal fluctuations at a more or less regular break. And when "they do occur, they cause a great deal of hardship to the people and expense to Government".<sup>19</sup> This belt is exposed to special hazards which is a constant source of trouble.<sup>20</sup> The table below gives the rainfall for the tehsil towns in the interior of the three tribal belts. For the Bhil belt two tehsil towns have been selected which represent the two areas of Nimar and Rath comprising the belt.

TABLE I  
RAINFALL IN TRIBAL AREAS

Year	Bhil belt		Saharia belt	Gond-Korku belt
	Jhabua	Barwani	Pohri	Khategaon
1948	29.6	36.16	35.87	N.A.
1949	28.0	24.8	42.67	N.A.
1950	41.0	21.10	27.60	45.85
1951	19.51	16.95	23.43	22.00
1952	32.96	11.89	16.60	23.66
1953	19.21	21.44	36.1	51.68
1954	30.98	28.56	33.74	37.09
Average	28.76	22.99	30.7	36.05

(N.A. = Not Available)

The table indicates the uncertain nature of rainfall in the last seven years for which statistics are available.

The rainfall has gone as low as 11 inches and as high as 51.68 inches. Jhabua in the Bhil belt shows an average of 28.76 and Barwani 22.99. Both these averages are within the range of the brown-belt. Pohri in the Saharia belt shows an average of 30.7, which is slightly higher than the maximum of the brown-belt. Khategaon in the Gond-Korku belt shows an average of 36.05. This is again higher than the brown-belt maximum. But a smaller sample appears to be the cause of this high average. The year 1953 had an unusually high precipitation which has raised the general average.

### *Distribution of Rainfall*

From the point of view of agriculture the total rain is not the only determinant of the moisture supply of the plants. Equally important is the distribution of the rains. In Nimar the average rain of 25" is considered sufficient for a good crop of cotton, provided it is well distributed. Some rain in August-September is essential for a good crop. The failure of rain at this time of the year has led to widespread scarcities in many a season. Particular mention might be made of the crop-year 1952-1953 when

the letting up of the rains in the months of August-September caused a widespread failure of crops and resulted in acute distress in the tribal areas.

The "mavtha" (winter rain) is a godsent to the rabi crop. If the rain is average the cultivator expects to get a fairly good rabi crop without irrigation only if the "mavtha" is timely and liberal.

### *Temperature*

Temperature plays an important part in the determination of the agricultural life of the people. The crop seasons are largely a result of the temperature and rainfall. Besides its influence on crops, it plays a not insignificant role in the determination of the character of the people. High temperature retards physical activity and induces lethargy and indolence.

From the climatic point of view the State can be divided into three well defined zones; the North with extremes of heat and cold; the Plateau which is more or less temperate; and lastly the Hills which are extremely hot and dry.

The Saharia belt falls more or less in two climatic zones. Parts of the district Morena and Shivpuri lie in the Northern zone of the extremes. Hot winds start blowing from the month of April and continue till the middle of September. The temperature throughout the long summer is high at all times of the day. The winter commences from October and the mercury from now on starts contracting, often falling below freezing point. The extreme cold causes heavy frosting during the months of December and January resulting in immense harm to the Rabi crops. The mountainous sections inhabited by the Saharias are subject to even greater extremes. Part of the Saharia belt lies in the temperate Plateau. But here too, the hills are hotter than the plains. Saharia life is, thus, set in the hotter parts of the zones.

The Gond-Korku belt, falling as it does, in the temperate zone, should normally be expected to enjoy respite from the rigours of the climate. But that unfortunately, is not

the case. Situated on the right side of the Narmada this belt is also confined to the Vindhyan offshoots. Thus it is hotter than the rest of the Plateau.

The Bhil belt is almost entirely situated in the Hot zone. Here the climate is excessively hot during the summer. The summers set in by the beginning of April, and last till the end of October.

#### *Agricultural Year :*

The agricultural year is divided into two seasons. The *Sialu* or *Kharif* and the *Unhalu* or *Rabi*:

*Sialu* or *Kharif* extends from *Baisakh* (April-May) to *Kunwar* (September-October). The *Unhalu* or *Rabi* extends from *Kunwar* to *Chaitra* (March-April).

*Sialu*: The kharif season begins by the end of May when summer ploughing commences and lasts till October when the crops are harvested. The kharif crops require a higher temperature and plentiful supply of water. Cereals such as jowar, bajra, makka, kodon etc., which are hardy and quick growing are the main crops of the season.

In the hilly soils it is not possible to begin tillage until there has been a shower to moisten the land. As soon as the first monsoon breaks the ploughs are put into fields. Because of the hard nature of the soils, the general practice is to give a thorough ploughing to the field after the previous crop. As generally only kharif crops are grown, this ploughing is done somewhere in October or November. In case rabi is grown, the ploughing is done sometime in March. After this the fields are left as they are. In the month of May the field is dry-manured with cowdung-cake and other refuse. The manure is distributed over the whole field. No ploughing or *bakhering* is done after manuring. It is *bakhered* just after the first shower by the end of May or the beginning of June. Immediately after the second shower the sowing is done. In the areas where the soils are extremely shallow the sowing commences as soon as the first rain is received. The idea is to take advantage of the early rain so that there may be sufficient time to take a rabi crop.

In the alluvial tracts generally a *bakhering* is done in the fields before the commencement of the rains. This uproots the weeds and shrubs etc. and the soil is in a better state to absorb rain. After the first shower, one good ploughing is done, and soon after the second shower the sowing is started.

The kharif crop is brought to maturity by the autumn rains received in the months of September and October. Failures of autumn rain results in fatal injury to the standing kharif crop and leads to short sowing of crops.

*Sowing* : The sowing is done with *tiphan* in Nimar and *nai* in Jhabua. For smaller grains and millets the sowing is done with *phadak* which sows two rows at a time. Cotton is sown by *phadak* as well as *nai*. Sometimes the seeds are simply broadcast and later covered with a light ploughing or *bakhering*.

*Weeding* : As soon as the seeds start germinating *nindui* (weeding) becomes necessary. *Nindai* is done either by hand or with *khurpis* or with a *dora* (harrow). Two weeks later, another weeding is done. When the plants are a month old the *galni* or *iltani* (thinning) is done. This is done by hand leaving a distance of 4" to 6" between the plants. Sometimes a *Kolpa* (small plough) is also used for interculture.

*Reaping* : Generally the crops are harvested with a *karati* (sickle) or pulled out by the roots (as in the case of gram). They are then bound into sheaves and carried to the *khala* (threshing floor) and then stored till dry. In case of *makki* the cobs are allowed to be dried in the fields. When the cobs are matured and dry the whole plant is cut together with the cobs, tied into sheaves and heaped in the *khala*. The cobs are removed at leisure and the seeds separated. For other grains the separated heads are placed on the ground of the *khala* and either beaten with mallets or trodden by the muzzled bullocks. This process is known as *dawan pherna*.

The next process is *khalna* (winnowing). The trodden grains are separated from the chaff. This process requires three persons. One person stands on a stool and empties

his basket of grains at a slow speed. Second person fans the falling grain which results in separating the chaff. The third person simply collects the grains below. If a good wind is prevailing at the time, fanning is not required. Sometimes the residue is re-trodden and rewinnowed.

The chaff is carefully collected and preserved as a cattle feed. The stalks of the dried plants are also stored as valuable roughages for the cattle.

The tribal agriculture is solely dependent on rains. In the Nimar district in the Bhil belt 91% of the area is under kharif crops while only 9% is under rabi crops.<sup>21</sup> Nimar includes quite a sizeable irrigated area. The rest of the belt has much less of irrigation. The dependence of the tribal belt on the kharif for its human needs as well as those of its large cattle population is a characteristic feature of tribal economy. In other belts also the tribal lands are suited for kharif only. Rabi in tribal cropping-scheme is a rarity. Even in the most interior tribal areas most of the rabi land is with non-tribals.

*Unhalu* : The preparation of the rabi starts soon after the kharif harvest. The field is ploughed or *bakhered* once to clear the stubble. Then it is given a planking with a plank 5 feet long and 9 to 12 inches wide and 3 to 4 inches thick, drawn by a pair of bullocks. Rabi crops, as a general rule, require comparatively less moisture and heat. The moisture is supplied by heavy winter dews and the *mavtha* (winter shower) which falls between December and February. But these sources of water can be depended upon only when the soil is sufficiently retentive and there happens to be a shower in November to suffice for the germination and growth of the plants. Otherwise the rabi is coexistent with irrigation. The main crops of the season are wheat, gram, barley etc. The Rabi crops do not require much of weeding and interculture. They are harvested from March to April. The harvest is earlier in the Bhil belt as compared to the Saharia belt.

#### CULTIVATED LAND

Of the total available land-area in Madhya Bharat roughly 38 per cent is under the plough. The rest of the

62 per cent is accounted for by fallows, culturable waste and uncultivable waste. Lack of irrigation, rocky nature of a large part of the terrain and primitive methods of cultivation are responsible for such a large wastage of land.

The present state of land utilization in the State is shown in the table below. In order to focus the attention on the tribal regions, the table deals with the natural divisions and the relevant districts in the three tribal belts only:

TABLE II  
LAND AREA PER CAPITA AND TREND OF CULTIVATION IN THE  
MADHYA BHARAT (1951)<sup>22</sup>

State, Divisions and Districts	Land area per capita		Area of cultivation per capita
	Total land area per capita	Area cultivated and cultivable per capita	
( Area in cents )			
Madhya Bharat	374	233	123.9
Lowland	309	160	104.2
Morena	450	196	119.6
Plateau	381	259	123.7
Shivpuri	543	334	112.7
Guna	570	355	137.3
Dewas	512	296	161.4
Hills .	422	233	145.0
Jhabua	424	228	129.1
Dhar	403	265	183.1
Nimar	433	215	159.3

The table shows that in 1951 the total land per capita in the State amounted to 374 cents. The cultivated and cultivable land area per capita amounted to 233 cents. And in terms of cultivated area per capita it came to 123.9 cents only. This means that 150.1 cents of land area per capita lies uncultivated for one reason or the other."

Being the region of highest density the Lowland has only 309 cents of land per capita, out of which the cultivated area is only 104.2 cents per capita. Plateau, coming second in the scale of density, has 381 cents of land area per capita, out of which 123.7 cents per capita is cultivated. The Hills, which are least densely populated, have 422 cents of total land per capita, out of which the cultivated area amounts to 145 cents per capita. On the average 277 cents of land per capita goes waste here as compared to 150.1 cents per capita in the whole State. The corresponding uncultivated land per capita in lowland is 204.8 cents and in the Plateau 257.3 cents. *Thus, the Hills show the highest total land area per capita and the highest cultivated land per capita. The Hills, incidentally, also show the highest uncultivated land per capita.*

The same characteristics mark the per capita land position in the relevant districts of the three tribal belts. Morena, Shivpuri and Guna in the Saharia belt show 450, 543 and 570 cents of land area per capita respectively. The Gond-Korku belt in Dewas shows 512 cents of land per capita, out of which only 161.4 cents per capita is cultivated. This belt also shows that a good deal of total land is not used for cultivation. In the Bhil-Bhilala belt covering the Hills, Jhabua shows the lowest area of cultivation with only 129.1 cents per capita. Dhar shows the highest cultivated land per capita with a figure of 183.1 cents. The poor quality of soils in the tribal areas in general and the Bhil-Bhilala belt in particular off-sets the advantage of larger cultivated land per capita in these areas.

### IRRIGATION

Madhya Bharat as a whole is highly deficient in the sources of irrigation, despite the presence of numerous streams, including such mighty rivers as the *Narmada* and the *Chambal*. In 1953-54 the total area sown in Madhya Bharat was 12,390,931 acres. Of this only 1,74,241 acres or roughly 2.15 per cent was irrigated. The percentage of irrigated area to the total area sown presents a very dismal picture. The table below gives a beltwise acreage under irrigation in 1953-54 :

TABLE III  
IRRIGATED AREA IN THE TRIBAL BELTS IN MADHYA BHARAT  
( IN 1953-54 )

	Total area sown (acres)	Total area irrigated (acres)	Percentage of the irrigated area.
<i>Bhil belt</i>			
Dhar	10,27,432	26,401	2.56
Jhabua	5,12,956	4,441	0.86
Nimar	13,62,992	32,836	2.40
<i>Saharia belt</i>			
Morena	8,55,643	80,794	1.01
Shivpuri	6,53,602	63,267	9.67
Guna	8,11,686	16,567	2.04
<i>Gond-Korku belt</i>			
Dewas	6,53,042	9,039	1.38

The above table gives a good idea of the position of irrigation in the tribal belts. Jhabua district which is overwhelmingly populated by Bhils and Bhilalas has merely a percentage of 0.86. We do not have any data as to what percentage of this irrigated area is part of the holdings of the tribal people. But looking to the fact that most of the better quality of land is with the castes considered high in the social hierarchy, it would not be wrong to presume that major part of the irrigated area must be in the non-tribal holdings. That would leave almost unirrigated land in the hands of the tribal farmer. Thus, there is almost no protection against the drought, and irregular rain can result in nothing but utter scarcity and untold misery to the teeming tribals. Dhar and Nimar figures are comparatively higher, having a percentage of 2.6 and 2.4 respectively. These figures do not give the exact idea of the irrigability of land so far as the tribal is concerned. District Dhar includes parts of Malwa Plateau which grew opium at one time. Fertile and riverine parts

of Nimar were also famed for its poppy cultivation.<sup>\*\*</sup> These poppy lands were and are in the hands of the non-tribals even today when poppy cultivation is highly restricted. Thus, even in these districts the irrigation does not play any role worth the name in the tribal economy.

Shivpuri in the Saharia belt has the highest percentage of irrigated area and Guna and Morena much lower. But the same tale is repeated here. Either the Saharia lives in the highlands where the sources of irrigation are extremely scanty, or if he happens to live in close proximity and in the midst of the sources of irrigation, he finds that the best of the land which could get the benefits of irrigation is in the hands of higher castes.

#### *Sources of Irrigation :*

The chief sources of irrigation in the State are canals, tanks, wells and others.

Of the sources of irrigation wells are the most important. In 1952-53 wells accounted for 61.34 per cent of the total irrigated area of the State. Canals irrigated 32.41 per cent of the irrigated area, tanks 4.82 per cent and other sources 1.62 per cent.

The table below gives the irrigated area in the tribal belts in 1952-53:

TABLE IV  
IRRIGATED AREA IN THE TRIBAL BELTS OF MADHYA BHARAT  
( 1952-53 ) ( in acres )

	Canals	Tanks	Wells	Other sources	Total
Dhar	21	459	24,555	471	23,506
Jhabua	nil	nil	4,069	317	4,386
Nimar	nil	1,903	28,833	1,951	32,687
Morena	10,557	2,573	21,410	549	35,080
Shivpuri	4,134	5,830	52,056	745	62,765
Guna	4,514	273	11,277	543	16,567
Dewas	50	733	8,025	70	8,878

(Department of Land Records and Settlement,  
Madhya Bharat)

The table shows that in the Bhil belt wells are the chief sources of irrigation. In Jhabua wells irrigate 4,069 acres of the total 4,386 acres of irrigated land in the district. Only 317 acres is irrigated by other sources. Thus, more than 90 per cent of the land is irrigated through wells. In Dhar and parts of Nimar also the wells are the chief sources of irrigation. But in these two districts tanks are plentiful and they supplement the wells. Jhabua has a terrain very well suited to the construction of tanks, but this possibility has not been exploited by the former rulers of the areas. Strangely enough, Nimar does not show any irrigation by canals despite the presence of Narmada in a large part of the district. This is, as we have seen earlier, due to the high banks of the river.

In the jungle areas of the Bhil-belt the number of wells is much smaller than in the open areas. Wells, generally, go with villages. The Bhils and the Bhilalas (mainly the Bhils) do not live in compact villages. As such there is little possibility of poor individuals digging their own wells. This socio-economic factor happens to coincide with the peculiar geology of the tribal habitat. In the archaic terrain of the Bhil belt the wells are not likely to yield sufficient water for irrigation in future as well.<sup>24</sup> The hope here lies in the construction of small bunds and tanks.

In the Saharia belt, particularly in Morena, canals irrigate nearly 10,557 acres of land coming next to wells which irrigate 21,410 acres. Shivpuri and Guna also show a relatively greater development of irrigation through canals and tanks, but wells continue to be the chief source here as well.

In the hilly tracts of the belt, where the tribals live, there is a dearth of wells, and canals are few. Rarely do we come across a Saharia with an irrigated piece of land, Kirars, Gujars, Kachhis and Ahirs—the four main cultivating castes of the area have the best of land divided between them.

The Gond-Korku belt is also predominantly dependent on the wells for irrigation. In the rocky areas the wells

are very few. The tribals generally live in these rocky areas subject to acute water scarcity for drinking as well as irrigational purposes.

### LAND TENURES

Of the covenanting States of Madhya Bharat, Gwalior State had most of the area under Zamindari system. The rest of the States had Ryotwari system. Most of the States had a number of small Jagirdars who followed either the Zamindari or the Ryotwari system.

#### *Historical*

The land revenue system in the Madhya Bharat is a very complicated one as a result of the peculiar history of the region. Originally the Central India had the Ryotwari or the peasant proprietorship system in common with the rest of the country. All land belonged to the Ruler or the State, and the man who cleared and tilled the land had the right of use as a tenant. This right of cultivating the holding was hereditary. The revenue was collected by the village headmen known as *Patels*, *Chowdhries* or *Mandlois* in Central India.

The incursions and invasions from other parts of India have been a peculiar feature of the history of Central India. Mohammedans, and later the Marathas conquered this area. These influences largely destroyed the existing ryotwari system. During these unsettled years the inalienable rights of the ryot were violated and rights of alienation were transferred or assigned to others. These assignees generally were :—

- (a) outsiders who came with the conqueror, and now required appeasement or,
- (b) old village headman who had obliged the Ruler in some way and had come to exercise great influence over him,
- (c) foreign contractors who replaced hereditary village headman who had disappeared from their posts owing to war and other causes.\*

These factors gave rise to Zamindari system in the Saharia belt. In the Bhil and Gond-Korku belt the middlemen came to be known as *Ijardars*, *Malguzars* and *Lambardars*. These middlemen had no respect for the rights of the cultivators and were only interested in keeping them attached to land and paying land revenue. By usage, sufferance, administrative indifference and other causes, these men gradually acquired rights and powers in the land they occupied, and over the heads of the people who cultivated them.<sup>26</sup>

On the return of peace and tranquility in the region the Ijardars and other middlemen except the Zamindars in the northern parts of the State, were gradually liquidated and hardly held any rights in land. The ryotwari system was reinstated.

While land was being assigned to middlemen the conquering chieftains created *jagirs* in favour of their relatives and powerful leaders. The cultivator was worst off in these jagirs where he was subjected to various levies and exactions unfair in the extreme. In these semi-independent and alienated areas the number of middlemen was even greater. These jagirs were subdivided again and again to provide for junior members of the ruling families.

### *Recent Legislation*

This state of chaos was brought to an end by the various ordinances issued by the State and several Acts passed by the legislature. With a view to bring uniformity in the Ryotwari area, the *Land Revenue and Tenancy Ordinance* was issued in 1948. Later in 1950 the *Land Revenue and Tenancy Act* (Act No. 66 of 1950) was enforced. This was followed by *Zamindari Abolition Act* and the *Abolition of Jagirs Act* in 1951. These Acts created uniformity in the tenancy and revenue administration throughout the State.

### *Types of Tenures*

At present the tenancies in the State are as follows :

- (i) *Pakka* tenant
- (ii) Ordinary tenant
- (iii) Sub-tenant
- (iv) Concessional holder
- (v) Special tenures

(i) *Pakka tenant*: It is a tenant who holds land for agricultural purposes and enjoys hereditary rights over his holding. He can sublet or sell the whole or a part of his holding if he so desires on certain conditions. But he cannot hold more than 50 acres of land and is not permitted to have a holding with less than 5 acres of irrigated land and 15 acres of non-irrigated land. He is also termed as *Pukhta Mauroosi*

(ii) *Ordinary tenant*: It means a tenant other than a *Pakka* tenant, but does not include the sub-tenant. This includes all types of temporary tenures.

(iii) *Sub-tenant* : It means a person who holds land from a *Pakka* or an ordinary tenant or from a holder of service-holding or from a concessional holder.

(iv) *Concessional holder* : It means a person who holds land on a revenue less than the revenue, which, but for a special tenure he would have been assessed.

(v) *Special tenures*: This class includes Jagirdars, Inamdaras, Istamurardars and Muafidars who enjoy certain proprietary rights in land free of revenue or on favoured assessment. Besides the above it also includes special leases granted by the Government for the development of land.

### *Tenancy In Tribal Economy*

The tenancies relevant to the tribal economy belong to the first three categories.

The proportion of the *Pakka* tenants is relatively the largest in the Bhil belt as this tract has been under ryotwari since long. The proportion of this type of tenure is very small in the Saharias and the Gonds and the Korkus.

Ordinary tenure, (including all types of temporary terms but not including sub-tenancy) is not very common in the Bhil belt. It is most common in the Saharia belt, where Saharia is a relatively new convert to settled agriculture. The most typical form of ordinary tenure is that which is known locally as *Arazi Ahatmal*. Generally, holdings of *danda* and *rankad* soil are not held in pakka tenure as these poor soils can be cultivated for not more than two years in succession. Next five years they are left uncultivated to allow them to recoupe their fertility. The landless Saharia is interested in cultivating this type of land to supplement his meagre incomes. The State allows this land to be leased for short leases of one year under ordinary tenancy. But the process of securing such a tenancy is so long and cumbersome that instead of going through the regular procedure the Saharia cultivates it without a tenure. Since it is now a well established irregularity the Revenue Department takes a lenient view of the practice, although technically it amounts to trespass, punishable by the dispossession of the trespasser or an imposition of fine upto Rs. 50/-. He is given the lightest penalty under the Act, and is charged only twice the normal annual rent of the land. This, the Saharia has no hesitation in paying promptly.

Sub-tenancy is common in all the tribal areas. This goes by the name of *sajhedari* (partnership) or *batai* (crop sharing) with minor differences. The *sajhedari* is offered when the number of male members in the owning family is very small, so far as the regular pakka tenant is concerned. On the other hand it is accepted by the *sajhedar* only when the number of the members in his family is large. It is profitable only when domestic labour is sufficient to meet the demand and no outside labour is employed. The land generally let out on *sajhedari* is of a poorer quality and rarely manured. The terms of contract are generally these : The *patta* continues to be on the name of the pakka tenant but the land revenue is paid on the fifty-fifty basis. The plough-cattle and the implements belong to the incoming partner. The pattedar himself does

not share in the cultivation of this land but supplies half the seed required for sowing. If labour is employed on the land the expenses are borne equally by the two partners. But this is rarely permitted by the pattedar. The gross produce is divided equally between the pattedar and the sajhedar. In case the pattedar supplies the plough cattle he gets 2/3 of the produce and the sajhedar gets only 1/3. The contract is generally oral and is renewable after every agricultural year. There are instances where *sajhedari* has been continuing for more than 10 years.

The *batai* differs from the *sajhedari* chiefly in that the pattedar in *batai* bears no share of the expenses of production except paying half the land rent. All the expenses are borne by the *bataidar*. The gross produce is shared equally by the two.

### CROP PRODUCTION

The conditions of topography, soil, climate and rainfall, that we find in the three tribal belts of the State, fashion the pattern of crop production to a great extent. Lack of irrigational facilities under such conditions makes the dependence on rains even more pronounced. In these areas of inadequate and uncertain rains, both with regard to the amount and its distribution, crop failures, scarcities and famines are common phenomena.

The stage in the tribal areas is thus set for an acute struggle between the mean and the miserly nature on one hand and the adaptable and adamant tribal on the other. In his struggle for existence the tribal has adopted the only form of agriculture possible in the land inhabited by him. From the point of view of the source of water supply it may be termed as 'Rainfed Farming', from the consideration of lack of artificial sources of water, it may be termed as Dry Farming, and from the point of view of the crops grown it may be termed as Millet Farming. As generally such mode of farming goes by the name of Dry Farming in our country, we shall stick to the use of this term in our deliberations.

### *Dry Farming*

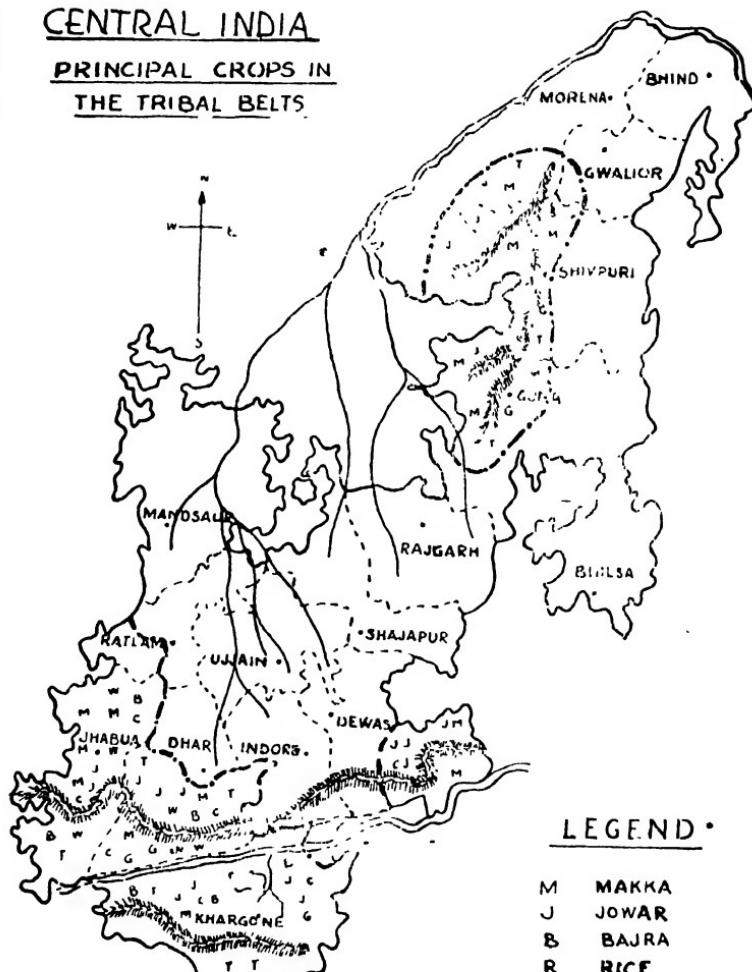
Dry Farming has been going on in the tribal areas of the State since times immemorial. The agricultural techniques in vogue in the areas are a result of the long process of adaptation spread over scores of centuries. But the rapid growth of population in the recent decades has exerted a very heavy pressure on the tribal land. Per capita land has diminished and the holdings have gone down. The pressure of population and the regulation of forest management has led to the use of marginal and sub-marginal lands for agricultural purposes. "Now many crops of exhaustive nature have been introduced and the cultivation of the whole land has continued year after year without any rest or without any effort to recuperate or maintain the fertility of land".<sup>n</sup> At the same time, acute soil erosion has been going on reducing the fertility of land.

Under such conditions of low and precarious rainfall, lack of irrigation and low fertility of the land, draught resistant and shallow rooted crops, mainly the millets, are grown in these areas. They form the staple food for both the man and the cattle. The most important crops grown are *Jowar* (*Andropogon sorghum*), *Bajra* (*Pennisitum typhoideum*), *Maize* (*Zea mays*), *savan* (*Panicum miliare*), *Kuthi* (*Dolichos biflorus*), *Tilli* (*Sesamum indicum*) and other small millets like *panicum frumentaceum*, *paspalum scrobiculatum* etc.

Besides these, where conditions are suitable, the following crops are also grown on a minor scale: *Dhan* (*Oryza sativa*), *Tuar* (*Cajanus indicus*), *Groundnuts* (*Arachis hypogaea*), *Cotton* (*Gossypium indicum*), *Chilies* (*Capsicum annuum*) and *Urd* (*Phaseolus mungo*).

### *Bhil Belt*

The table below gives the total area under the main crops in this belt in 1953-54 :

CENTRAL INDIAPRINCIPAL CROPS IN  
THE TRIBAL BELTS.LEGEND.

M	MAKKA
J	JOWAR
B	BAJRA
R	RICE
C	COTTON
G	GROUNDNUT
W	WHEAT
T	TILLI
S	GRAM

TABLE V  
TOTAL AREA UNDER VARIOUS CROPS IN THE BHIL BELT  
( 1953-54 )

	Jhabua	Dhar	Nimar
Cereals	3,34,282	5,26,250	6,60,197
Pulses	69,814	1,76,883	1,99,049
Oilseeds	54,797	92,860	1,32,916
Fibres	49,487	1,25,212	3,57,566
Fodder crops	1	2,283	1,905
Total area sown	5,08,381	9,23,488	13,51,633

The largest proportion in this belt is under cereals, accounting for more than half the total sown area. The predominantly tribal district of Jhabua gives a better idea of the typical picture of tribal crops. Of the 5,08,381 acres of total sown area 3,34,282 is under cereals, pulses coming next, followed by oilseeds and fibres. It is notable that area under fodder crop in the year under consideration was only 1 acre.

The table below gives the acreage under various cereals in the belt in 1953-54 :

TABLE VI  
AREA UNDER VARIOUS CEREALS IN THE BHIL BELT (1953-54)  
( In acres )

Cereals	Jhabua	Dhar	Nimar
Makka	1,43,136	96,506	52,549
Jowar	41,251	2,28,512	4,12,500
Bajra	24,810	45,815	1,08,894
Rice	32,322	21,595	21,505
Wheat	4,018	1,09,365	50,256
Barley	439	279	14
Other cereals	88,306	24,178	14,479
	3,34,282	5,26,250	6,60,197

The table shows that of the total acreage of 3,34,282 under cereals in Jhabua 1,43,136 acres is under makka. In Dhar and Nimar also it accounts for a considerable area. Makka is the most favourite cereal of the Bhils and the Bhilalas. It is grown on the *gorma* or manured land. Generally the land around the Bhil hamlet is used for this crop. This land gets the manure from the cattle kept by the cultivator. The reason for the importance attached to makka in tribal agriculture is probably due to the fact that makka takes much shorter time to ripen requiring nearly 100 days for the cobs to be ready. After makka is harvested there is ample chance of taking a wheat crop in the field, provided the winter rain is timely. But if jowar is grown the field is occupied 4 to 5 months and there is hardly time for the rabi crop.

The other crop next in the scheme of tribal agriculture is jowar, which these people reverently call as *jowar mata* or 'Mother Jowar'. The jowar has magico-religious significance in tribal life. Small millets also occupy an important place in the tribal agriculture. Dhan is grown near streams or low places where rain water can be stored.

Commercial crops like cotton and groundnut are grown in the black soils occurring in the area. In ordinary laterites these heavy crops are not grown.

Wheat, likewise, is grown in the heavier soils with or without irrigation. Possibility of growing wheat on retentive soils without irrigation depends on the good rains preceding the rabi and liberal winter rains afterwards. These two conditions sometimes enable the Bhil cultivator to take an additional crop of wheat or gram after makka. The income so had is in the nature of a windfall and is very rare—once in many years.

The average seed rate and yield per acre in the belt are as follows:

Crop	Average seed rate per acre	Average yield per acre (unirrigated)
Makka	8 to 10 seers	3 to 4 mds.
Jowar	6 to 7 seers	3 mds.

Crop	Average seed rate per acre	Average yeild per acre (unirrigated)
Bajra	3 to 4 seers	3 mds.
Barley	8 to 12 seers	4 mds.
Tilli	2 to 3 seers	3 mds.
Tuar	.6 to 8 seers	3 mds.
Wheat	10 seers to 1 md.	4 mds.
Gram	32 seers to 1 md.	3 mds.

The seed rates are rather high and yields very low. The proportion of seed weight to total yield in kharif varies from 1 : 10 to 1 : 20. In rabi crops the average seed rate is higher. This is due to poor rate of germination of rabi seeds in the low-fertility and low-moisture content of the tribal soils. Due to unsuitability of the soil for rabi crops the proportion between seed weight and yield drops down considerably.

### *Saharia Belt*

In the Saharia belt cereals occupy the largest portion of cultivated land with pulses coming next and oilseeds after that. Fibres occupy a minor place in this belt, with fodder coming last. In the Saharia agriculture *jowar*, *makka*, *bajra*, *dhan*, *tilli* and *kutki* and other millets are the staple crops. *Tilli* is generally grown as a commercial crop which the Saharia sells in the market either to get his other requirements or to get some cash to pay the land revenue etc.

*Jowar* is grown where the *mar* land is available. Sometimes it is grown on *danda* as well. *Makka* is generally grown on *kitat kheda* or land near village sites which are manured in the normal course by the village cattle. Millets like *kodon*, *fikar* and *rameli* are generally grown on the *danda* and *rankad* land. *Tilli* and *Bajra* are also grown on this type of soil.

The average seed rate and yield per acre in the Saharia belt are as follows :—

Crop	Average seed rate per acre	Average yield per acre (unirrigated)
Makka	10 seers	3 mds.
Jowar	3 seers	4 mds.
Bajra	4 seers	3 mds.
Tilli	3 seers	3 mds.
Alsi	8 seers	4 mds.
Wheat	1 md.	4 mds.
Rice	1 md.	5 mds.

Seed rates on the whole are higher in this belt also. The yields are proportionately lower. As we go from kharif to rabi crop the seed rate increases without a corresponding increase in the yield. This pattern again underlines the unsuitability of the average tribal holding for rabi crops.

### *Gond-Korku Belt*

In this belt more or less the same crops are grown as in the Bhil belt. Cereals occupy the first place in this belt with fibres coming second. Pulses come third and the oilseeds last. This pattern is due to the fact that next to cereals cotton is grown extensively. Groundnut and tilli are not major crops in this area. Of the cereals jowar is the most important, occupying about 2/3 of the land under cereals. Jowar is the staple crop in this belt which supplies grains to men and fodder to the cattle. In the Gond-Korku economy, next to jowar comes makka and then bajra. The khardi soil of the region is suited to these drought resistant crops only. The Gond and the Korku cultivators are very indifferent to their crops. They are always running to forest either for employment as labourers or for illegal felling. Consequently the crops are neglected and the yields are extremely poor.

**Seeds :** The quality of seeds plays a very important role in agriculture. Improved seeds, suitable to the soil and climate of the tract concerned, ensure good germination, better plant growth and higher and better quality of yield. In the rural economy of the

tribal countryside this aspect of agronomy is very sadly neglected. There has not been sufficient research to evolve suitable strains for the hilly and the hot areas of the State. The Institute of Plant Industry at Indore has been doing excellent work in this field, but its activities are mainly confined to wheat, cotton and ground-nut. For dry crops like *jowar*, *makka*, *bajra* and *millets* etc. it has not done much work. After the formation of the Madhya Bharat the State Agriculture Department paid some attention to this problem. But as the Department was not equipped with a competent plant-breeding section, its work has largely been confined to acclimatisation and selection of more suitable strains from the existing ones.

Secondly, the seed-types found suitable by experimentation could not be popularised on a large scale. The tribal cultivator generally gets his seeds from the village *mahajan* on credit basis. After harvest the seed is returned to the *mahajan*, one and a half times or twice the weight of the seed borrowed. Seed is rarely purchased in cash from open market. Therefore, the seed type depends on the village *mahajan* who has no scruples in supplying the worst quality of grain for this purpose. Unless this source is regulated, the seed quality has no early chance of improving.

And thirdly, the tribal cultivator has become so fatalistic and so pessimistic about possibilities of improvement in his hereditary lot that even when he can afford to buy seed on cash he does not bother about any particular variety. He takes what he can get from the nearest *hat* or the village *bania*. The correlation between seed type and crop yield is not understood by him.

**Manures:** Manuring does not find important place in tribal agriculture, though it can not be denied that the tribal cultivator is quite aware of its usefulness. The most familiar manure in the tribal countryside is the common farm yard or cattle manure. Green manuring is generally unknown. Even if it is made known it would have no chance in the tribal agriculture where only kharif crop is taken. It would be a suicidal luxury for the tribal culti-

vator to devote any part of his small holding for the entire season for green manure. The crop rotation practised in these areas does not generally include fallows that might be used for the purposes of green manuring. Chemical fertilizers are also unknown. In the absence of irrigational facilities there does not appear to be much scope for them as chemical fertilizers, particularly ammonium sulphate, are considered to be injurious to crops without sufficient irrigation.

Farm yard manure is the only manure that is generally used. But composting is not done. Sometimes plants and shrubs are burnt *in situ* to provide ash manure to the soil. The Bhils and the Bhilalals keep a large number of cattle and goats for the purposes of manure. Among them cattle folding is also practised. But the manurial attention is generally confined to fields round the hamlets. Among the Bhils the manuring is mostly confined to Makka. Among the Saharias, Gonds and Korkus where agriculture is minor and tenures are temporary, generally few cattle are owned. This source of valuable organic manures is, thus, denied to them. Poverty prohibits purchasing manure from market. And the lands continue to get poorer and poorer every year.

Besides poverty the biggest factor discouraging use of manures is the form of tenure. The nature of tenure determines the duration of the interest of the cultivator in a particular holding. Manures have a residual effect, that is, there is a time lag between the application and the total utilization of manure. If the cultivator has a temporary tenure of a holding, he is not likely to invest in it by manuring it. In the *arazi ahatmal* land in the Saharia-belt, manuring is not done. Likewise, no manuring is done in the holdings cultivated on *batai* or crop sharing basis. Thus, all such land which is sublet, generally goes without manures. The proportion of temporary tenures (sub-let or held for a short stipulated period only) is quite considerable in the tribal areas. High prevalence of this form of land-rights leads to pauperisation of land.

*Crop rotation* : Crop rotation (*panwa*) is practised by the tribal people in all the belts. The scope of the rotation is, however, very restricted due to one-crop economy and dry farming. Wherever land is very poor and suited to only one crop, the question of crop rotation does not arise. Crop rotation is not done on the *gorma* or *kitat kheda* which gets manure. The common crop rotation when practised, is as follows :

*Bhil belt* : 1. Jowar, cotton, tilli, jowar, 2. Jowar gram, cotton, 3. Jowar, tilli and rameli, 4. Jowar, bajra, cotton, jowar, 5. Cotton, wheat, jowar, groundnuts.

*Saharia belt* : 1. Tilli, jowar, chana, 2. Dhan, jowar, matar, masur, 3. Makka, jau, wheat, 4. Jowar, wheat.

The crop rotation in the Gond-Korku belt is the same as in the Bhil belt.

*Mixed cropping* : Mixed cropping is resorted to guard against the total failure of crops. Generally, crops maturing at different periods are mixed together. The most common mixtures are jowar and tuar, cotton and tilli, tilli and jowar, jowar and cotton, wheat and gram, linseed and wheat.

#### AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS

Before proceeding to discuss the size and nature of holding in the tribal areas, we can profitably spend some time in discussing the size and nature of holdings in the State on the whole.

The table below gives the percentage of holdings and total area under various grades of holdings :

TABLE VII

Grades of holdings (in acres)	Percentage of Area under personal cultivation	
	Percentage of holdings	Percentage of area
Less than 5	46.4	10.3
5—10	22.7	16.7
11—15	12.0	15.1
		42.1

Grades of holdings (in acres)	Percentage of Area under personal cultivation	
	Percentage of holdings	Percentage of area
16—30	13.2	28.0
31—45	3.3	12.3
46—60	1.2	6.1
Above 60	1.2	11.5

(Source: Second Five Year Plan p. 216)

The table shows that holdings with less than 5 acres form 46.4 per cent of the total holdings in the State. Holdings between 5—10 acres account for another 22.7 per cent and holdings in the grade 11 to 15 acres amount to 12.0 per cent. These three grades account for 81.1 per cent of the total holdings. But they cover only 42.1 per cent of the total land. Holdings in the grade 16—30 acres account for 13.2 per cent of the total holding covering 28.0 per cent of total cultivated land. Holding in the grade 31 to 60 acres account for 5.7 per cent of the holdings only but covering 29.9 per cent of land.

The sample survey conducted by the author among the various tribes reveals the real position of land holdings in the tribal areas. The table below gives the results of this survey :

TABLE VIII  
PERCENTAGE OF LAND HOLDINGS IN VARIOUS GRADES  
AMONG THE VARIOUS TRIBES

No.	Tribe	Percentage of holdings in various grades				
		Less than 5 acres	5—10 acres	11—15 acres	16—20 acres	21 and above acres
1	Bhil	22.8	26.1	32.6	13.5	5
2	Bhilala	24.6	25.5	28.0	14.7	7.2
3	Saharia	57.4	28.6	14.0	—	—
4	Korku	20.0	20.0	60.0	—	—
5	Gonds	20.0	40.0	20	—	20

(Source : Sample Survey)

Despite the very small size of the sample taken, the table does indicate the broad pattern of the distribution of land among the tribals. In the Bhils 22.8 per cent of holdings are below 5 acres. And in the Bhilalas 24.6 per cent of holdings are in this grade. The Korkus and Gonds show that 20.0 per cent of their holdings are in this grade. As compared to the general picture of the State we find that whereas the State percentage in this grade is 46.4, the tribes mentioned above have a much lower percentage in this grade. Only Saharias show a percentage of 57.4 in this grade which is higher than the State average. In the grade 5—10 acres the State average is 22.7 per cent. All the tribes excluding Gonds show a much higher percentage in this grade. Among the tribes next to Gonds come the Saharias with a percentage of 28.6. Bhils with 26.1 come next and Bhilalas with 25.5 come last. In the grade 11—15 acres the State average is 12 per cent. All the tribes show higher percentage in this grade. The highest average is among the Korkus, 60 per cent of whose holdings are in this grade. Bhils have 32.6 per cent, Bhilalas 28.0, Gonds 20 and Saharias 14 per cent. Despite difference in frequencies in the various grades there is broad similarity in the pattern. In the State as a whole land holdings of 15 acres and less account for 81.1 per cent of the total holdings. Comparing this pattern with that of Bhils we find that 81.5 per cent of holdings are of 15 acres and less. In Bhilalas 78.1 per cent of holdings are of 15 acres and less. Thus, in both these main tribes nearly 80 per cent of the holdings are 15 acres and less. Only 20 per cent of holdings are above 15 acres.

The lower frequency of smaller holdings, particularly in the grades below 10 acres, and higher frequency in the grade 11—15 acres in the tribals need an explanation. Going by absolute size tribal holdings appear to be larger. But when we consider the actual cultivated and uncultivated land in the tribal holdings in general, this notion is dispelled. Most of the tribal holdings, particularly in the Bhils and Bhilalas, have quite a high percentage of *banjar* (waste) land, generally consisting of bare rocks. We had

occasion to refer to this characteristic of land-use earlier in our discussion on land *per capita* in various divisions and tribal districts. We had seen the great wastage of land in the tribal areas due to its rocky nature. Secondly, these holdings contain quite a good proportion of thin land of such poor fertility that after every two crops or so it has to be rested. Thus every holding contains a lot of land that is not put under the plough every year. Consideration of this aspect of actually cultivable and cultivated land tends to make holdings larger—so that each holding may have some fertile land included into it. Another contributory cause is that sub-division of holdings is much less in tribal areas. Larger families being a rule and splitting up of families after the father's death being rare, the brothers stick together and add new lands to their holdings and cultivate them jointly. The State regulation prohibiting sub-division of holdings into units smaller than 15 acres again acts in favour of the maintenance of bigger holdings.

Saharias, on the other hand, show the typical State pattern as they are new in the field of settled agriculture. Due to the appropriation of the most of the cultivable land by old cultivating castes, they are content to have smaller holdings. Korku and Gond pattern, as shown in the table above, is to be considered with the pre-condition that the size of sample in this case was small. They, therefore, show very broad patterns only. Gonds having 20 per cent of holdings above 21 acres, show very high proportion of big holdings. To some extent it is explained by the small size of sample and to some extent by the fact that some Gonds in this area are descendants of rich Gonds of the former ruling caste of Gondwana in Madhya Pradesh. Raj Gonds, as these castes are called, have large estates in land even now.

The general conclusion would be that of the various tribes Saharias are the worst placed in the matter of land size. Relatively, Bhils and Bhilalas are better off. Between the Bhils and Bhilalas the latter have generally higher percentage of bigger holdings. Generally they have better

land as they are an old agricultural class, whereas the Bhil is relatively a newcomer to the field.

### ECONOMIC HOLDING

Keating had defined economic holding on the basis of the net income that would accrue to a man to support him and his family on a reasonable standard of comfort.<sup>28</sup> Dr. Baljit Singh on the other hand thought that "the conception of an economic holding with reference to the standard of living of the worker is not capable of any definiteness or precision".<sup>29</sup> He, accordingly, suggested, "A better way of approach would be to define an economic holding for a family as one which provides remunerative employment to the members".<sup>30</sup> But he warns that the economic family holding would be a moving point and would in practise be indeterminable.<sup>31</sup> He then goes on to consider the size of holding from the operational point of view. This he terms as optimum cultivation unit and defines it as "of a size at which the relationship between costs and yields gives the maximum of profits per acre to the worker".<sup>32</sup> The Planning Commission of India seems to have synthesized these two view points to give a new definition of family holding.

The Commission considers it from two view points :—

- (i) as an operations<sup>1</sup> unit, and
- (ii) as an area of land, which can yield a certain average income. Proceeding on this concept the Commission defines family holding as "an area equivalent, according to local conditions and under existing conditions of technique, either to a plough unit for a family of average size working with such assistance as is customary in agricultural occupations".<sup>33</sup>

However extensive and well worded, the definition does not succeed in getting out of a series of abstractions. In practise, as Dr. Singh had stated earlier, the concept remain 'indeterminable.'

In the absence of detailed information regarding the productivity of soil, value of crops raised and expenses incurred, it is not possible to suggest any exact size of

economic family holdings in the various tribes of the State. The tribal people are not given to keeping quantitative estimates of the various expenses they incur and the produce they collect. Therefore, it becomes all the more difficult to arrive at an exact quantitative answer to this problem.

The Madhya Bharat Revenue and Tenancy Act laid down that no holding could be reduced to a size smaller than 15 acres of dry land and 5 acres of wet land. This probably, indicates that for the State as a whole 15 acres of dry land or 5 acres of wet land was considered to be some sort of a minimum holding. In the tribal areas irrigation is almost absent, therefore the 15 acres limit would be the only relevant prohibition. Now, the soil in the tribal areas is so poor, and a good part of the holding so rocky, steep and eroded that 15 acres here would not compare in yield with 15 acres, say, on the Plateau or the Lowland. Considering the fertility of the soil, usable proportion of the holding, and the uncertain nature of rains, the economic family holding in the tribal areas would in no case be less than 20—25 acres of dry land. Larger size of average family among the tribals and deplorable standards of capital investment would also support this contention. This finds support in the researches made in similar tracts elsewhere. For instance in the jowar—cotton tracts of Gujrat where dry farming is practised, Desai considered a holding of 15—20 acres as economic.<sup>34</sup> In case of the aboriginal tribes he considered up to 25 acres as uneconomic.<sup>35</sup> Not allowing extremely bad areas to get an undue weightage we can safely take the lower limit of the range and regard holdings below 20 as uneconomic. Taking roughly 21 acres and more as the size of economic family holding in the tribal areas, the picture we get is a very dismal one. More than 74.2 per cent of the Bhils have uneconomic holdings, 73.2 per cent of Bhilala holdings are uneconomic. Among the Saharias, Korkus and even Gonds more than 90 per cent holdings are uneconomic. In these last three tribes a very small fraction of cultivation is found in the group having economic holdings. Relatively

speaking, the Bhils and the Bhilalas are better placed in this matter than the Saharias, the Korkus and the Gonds.

### LAND REVENUE

Land revenue is the most important State tax. Land revenue is the oldest of all taxes known to us from the early Vedic period. It was charged as the king's share in the agricultural produce of the cultivator. Manu had fixed this share between  $1/6$  to  $1/12$  of the gross produce depending on the quality of soil. Kautilya had fixed the Royal share as  $1/6$  of the produce. This share was termed as *bali* or *bhaga*.

In Madhya Bharat, the different regions had different systems of land administration. The former Gwalior State had large areas under the zamindari system and the rest of the States, including Holkar State (Indore State), had ryotwari systems and were duly surveyed and settled. Areas like Alirajpur and Jobat (district Jhabua) were largely non-surveyed and non-settled. According to the system of land administration the methods of land rent assessment were also different in different areas. The settled areas had adopted more or less empirical methods of assessing the land revenue. The areas that were not settled had either summary settlements or *ad hoc* settlements.

In the southern part of Madhya Bharat, which covers the Bhil and the Gond-Korku belts, the most advanced State in this respect was the Holkar State. It had carried out elaborate and painstaking settlements periodically and its land administration was emulated by other States like Dhar and Dewas.

Settlement reports of the Holkar State provide us with a good source of the study of the various aspects of land revenue. It is relevant from the point of view of tribal economy also, as the Holkar State included large Bhil-Bhilala areas in Khargone (now District Nimar) and Petlawad (now district Jhabua), and the Gond-Korku areas of Nemawar (now district Dewas).

The land revenue in the Holkar State was assessed on the following consideration.<sup>36</sup>

- (i) Character and capacity of soils,
- (ii) the caste, character and economic condition of the tenantry,
- (iii) the character of the crops produced,
- (iv) the distance from the market,
- (v) the means of communications, and
- (vi) the paying capacity of the cultivators.

Assessment done on this basis yielded very divergent incidences of land revenue. In Khargone, for instance, the assessment per acre was as high as Rs. 3/- and as low as Annas 5. The fertile Indore district had an all round incidence of Rs. 3-12-0 per acre. In Nemawar it was Rs. 1-12-4 and in Nimar only Rs. 1-6-3. The wet incidence was about 4½ times as much as the dry one.<sup>37</sup> For the State as a whole the all round incidence was Rs. 2-1-0 per acre. Considering that 30 per cent of the occupied area was uncultivated the incidence was in effect much higher.<sup>38</sup> The share of the State amounted to not more than 1/11 of the gross produce from agriculture.

This was in 1929. Coming to the more recent past we have no settlement data to go by for the discussion of the incidence of land revenue in Madhya Bharat. We can, however, get some idea of the incidence of land revenue per acre by the size of the agricultural population, acreage under cultivation and the total land revenue assessed. The table below gives these figures with relation to the Madhya Bharat in general and the tribal district of Jhabua in particular.

TABLE IX  
LAND REVENUE PER CAPITA AND PER ACRE

	Madhya Bharat	Jhabua Dist.
1 Agricultural Population <sup>39</sup>	48,96,788	3,30,934
2 Land Under cultivation (acres)	1,09,16,951	4,67,103

	Madhya Bharat	Jhabua Dist.
3 Land revenue (Rs.)	3,09,97,676	6,03,009
4 Per Capita cultivated land (acres)	2.23	1.41
5 Per Capita land revenue (Rs.)	6.33	1.80
6 Per acre land revenue	1.80	1.28

The table shows that per capita cultivated land in Madhya Bharat in 1951-52 was 2.23 acres, but in Jhabua the per capita cultivated land was only 1.41 acres. On the basis of this land distribution the per capita land revenue in the whole State worked out to Rs. 6.33 whereas in the tribal Jhabua it was only Rs. 1.80. Taking the incidence of land revenue per acre of land we find that in the State as a whole this incidence was Rs. 1.80 and in Jhabua it was Rs. 1.28. As compared to the State as a whole Jhabua has a lower per capita land revenue and per acre land revenue. This is explained by the fact that the cultivated land as related to total cultivating population is lower in Jhabua. Lower quality of land means lower assessment of land revenue per acre. The State as a whole shows a high per capita land revenue as it includes land of better grades with higher quality of soil and more proportion of irrigation. Various cash crops like cotton, wheat, and groundnut are grown in these areas. Communications are better and the markets are nearer. The general level of economic activity is at a higher pitch and the economic condition of the cultivators in general is much better than in the Jhabua.

The tribal setting throughout the State presents the same characteristics so far as the various factors affecting land revenue are concerned. Therefore, with very slight variations the per capita incidence of land revenue would be about the same in the Saharia and the Gond-Korku belts as in the Jhabua.

#### CATTLE AND LIVESTOCK

The role of livestock in general and the cattle in particular in the tribal economy is directly connected with

agriculture and tenures. In the tribes where settled agriculture is practised and the proportion of land owning tillers is large, the cattle population is also large. But in tribes where shifting cultivation was practised until recently and where the tribals have not been able to make the transition to settled agriculture, either because of long traditions of axe cultivation or because of the paucity of cultivable land, the livestock population is very small. Wherever the cultivator has land of his own, even it be very small, he acquires livestock. In the tribal economy the cattle find the greatest use. They supply the draught necessary for various tillage operations and for transport. Another important use of cattle relates to manure. In the peculiar soil conditions of the tribal areas manuring becomes a necessity. Their staple crop, the makka, and the various cash crops like cotton and groundnut require good doses of manure. The tribal cultivator is so poor that he can rarely afford to purchase manure. The easiest way out for him is to rear his own cattle. Since he does not feed his cattle on costly concentrates, the rearing of cattle does not involve any extra expenditure. Even roughages he gets as a byproduct of the makka and jowar that he grows. Rest of the roughages the cattle get from grazing on the *charnoi* (pasture) land. Manure is the primary consideration for rearing large number of cattle, goats and buffaloes. The second consideration relates to draught power and the third to milk and milk products.

#### *Breeds of Cattle in the Tribal Areas*

In the Bhil belt of State the main breeds of cattle are *Malwi*, *Nimari* and *Khillari* with local breeds dominated by these strains. Malwi breed is found mainly on the Plateau and the adjoining areas. The Nimari breed is found in the district Nimar of the Hill division.

Malwi is chiefly a draught breed. Its dominating colour is pure white. The size is medium. The bullocks are strong but not fast.

The Nimar cattle are found all over the Nimar district of the State. Nimari breed is also prized for draught purposes. The milch capacity of Nimari cows is very limited.

The cattle bred on the Satpuras are smaller and lighter as compared to those bred in the Narmada valley.

Satpuras in the Nimar have another breed of cattle for draught purposes known as the *khillari* breed. This is a hardy and rather wild breed used mainly for dragging carts.

In the hilly tracts of Nimar, Dhar and Jhabua many local breeds are found which are much smaller. These local breeds are dominated by several strains but mainly by the dominant breed of the region. In Sailana, for instance, the local breed is dominated by the *Dongri* breed of adjoining Rajasthan. In Alirajpur tehsil of Jhabua district Gir blood is visible in the local breed. In Jhabua most dominant strain is the Malwi, although the cattle are small and weak.

In the Gond-Korku belt the Gondi or the Gondwani is the chief breed. The Gondi cattle are very hardy, though smaller in stature as compared to Malwi and Nimari.

In the Saharia belt the main breed of cattle is the Malwi. In Morena and Shivpuri there are local breeds of cattle which are hardy. These local breeds are also mainly of draught type.

### *Density of Livestock*

Each tribal belt has its own characteristics regarding the density of livestock. But all the tribal belts show a remarkably high density of cattle population.

The table below gives the density of livestock in the three tribal belts as the number of livestock per 100 acres of cultivated land :

TABLE X  
DENSITY OF LIVESTOCK IN THE TRIBAL AREAS

No.	District	Net cultivated area (in acres)	Total live-stock (per 100 acres) (1951)	Density of live-stock (per 100 acres of cultivated land).
1	Jhabua	4,67,103	5,52,591	11
2	Dhar	9,23,305	6,87,092	73
3	Nimar	2,27,539	7,52,009	61 } 84

No.	District	Net cultivated area (in acres)	Total live-stock (per 100 acres of cultivated land).	Density of live-	
				stock (1951)	acres of cultivated land).
4	Dewas	6,10,305	4,17,507	67	67
5	Shivpuri	5,97,408	9,19,517	153	
6	Guna	7,31,501	8,01,198	109	121
7	Morena	7,95,000	8,13,935	102	

District Jhabua in the Bhil belt shows a density of 118, the highest in the belt. Dhar with 73 comes next and Nimar last with 61. Dewas, in which lies the Gond-Korku belt, shows a density of 67. The districts of Shivpuri, Guna and Morena show a density of 153, 109 and 102 respectively.

This indicates that in all the tribal belts density of livestock population is very large from the point of view of the carrying capacity of the land. The poor soils of these areas can hardly be expected to keep the livestock in good health and vigour. As a region the Saharia belt shows an average density of 121, which is the highest of all the belts. The Bhil belt has an average density of 84 and the Gond-Korku belt only 67. From this picture of density one would normally expect the largest number of livestock per household in the Saharia belt, with Bhil belt coming second and the Gond-Korku belt coming last. But sample survey shows that the pattern of livestock keeping in the three belts is altogether different. The table below shows the average number of livestock (excluding poultry) per household among the various tribes.

TABLE XI  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF LIVESTOCK IN EACH TRIBAL  
HOUSEHOLD

No.	Average number of livestock per family
1	Bhil
2	Bhilala
3	Saharia
4	Korku
5	Gond

The table shows that Bhilalas have an average of 12.1 livestock per household. The Bhil comes close second with 10.2 livestock per household. The Saharia has an average of 1.87 only. The Korku has an average of 3.7 and the Gond 4.6.

The Saharia, although inhabiting the region of highest livestock density has the least number of livestock per household. The reason is that in the Central India settled agriculture and cattle go together. The Saharia has been used to forestry and shifting cultivation till very recently. Neither of these occupations need very many cattle. Populations practising shifting cultivation have a certain amount of nomadism which would not facilitate rearing of a large number of livestock. Now, when the Saharias have been deprived of shifting cultivation they do not have sufficient land to settle down to agriculture, cultivating their own land. In the absence of ownership of land and no possibilities of availability of enough cultivable land they cannot afford to keep many animals with them. It would be unnecessary and wasteful. Thus historical reasons and present pressure of population on land have made Saharias an anachronism—a tribe in the land of overpopulated livestock having very little livestock of its own.

The Bhils and the Bhilalas on the other hand keep large number of animals. They live in compact groups in the south and outnumber the non-tribals. They hold most of the land in their region and even if the holdings are small, the hills and wastelands are plenty and the Bhil and the Bhilala can afford to keep many animals. They like to keep cattle, goats and sometimes buffaloes. These animals supply invaluable manure free of cost, provide cheap draught and even yield some milk for the household. At times their bullocks may be offered for rent. If the tribal gives a pair of bullocks on hire for the Rabi he can easily earn about thirty rupees for the season. In kharif he would get about twice the above amount. The young ones may be reared and sold on maturity, bringing additional income to the family coffers. The Bhil and the Bhilala is so conscious of the economy of the cattle that he rarely milks

his cows. The heifer and the calf are allowed to suck all the milk they can so that they may grow strong and vigorous.

The Gond with 4.6 livestock per household and Korku with 3.7 show that relatively they have more animals per household (as compared to Saharias). But as compared to Bhils and the Bhilalas they have fewer animals per household.

### *Evil Effects of Large Livestock Population*

It is apparent that the large livestock population in the Bhil belt, under the present circumstances of land fertility and the plethora of uneconomic holdings, cannot but lead to a gradual deterioration in the breed of the livestock particularly the cattle which is most numerous. Although, the number of cattle in this belt is large, its performance as draught and milch cattle is deplorably poor. Neglected feeding and indiscriminate breeding are sure to make the breed poorer and poorer. Merely cheap supply of manures does not justify such a large livestock population, most of which is superfluous and redundant. The tribal cultivator here has been caught in a vicious circle where he can not replace the quantity with quality. Given an economic unit of cultivation he would not need so many useless cattle for dung alone. As Dr. Baljit Singh has remarked, "a petty holding and an inferior pair of bullocks go together. We cannot eliminate the one without doing away with the other."<sup>40</sup>

## CHAPTER VI

### •FORESTS

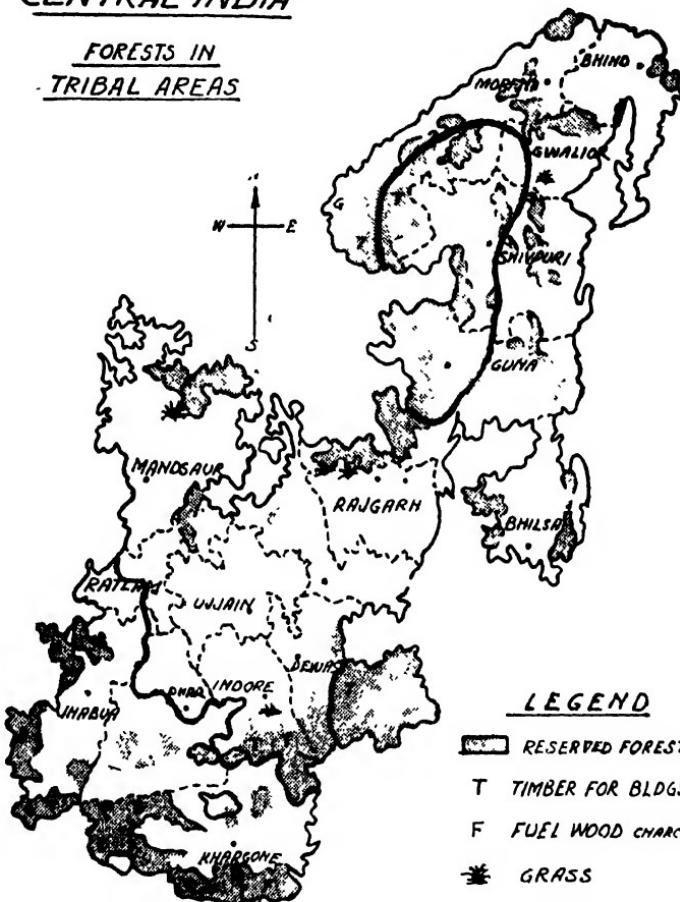
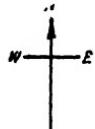
#### FORESTS IN TRIBAL ECONOMY

Tribal Economy is characterised by the close relation between economy and the habitat.<sup>1</sup> Not being powerful enough to modify the surroundings, the tribals learn to adapt themselves to it. Majumdar points out, "Primitive society has tried to work out some kind of adjustment between material needs and the potentialities of the environment."<sup>2</sup> This is nowhere more clearly evident than in the adjustment of the tribal needs and efforts to the forests that beset them. The tribal dependence on forests for food, fuel, house-building materials, agricultural implements and minor produce for barter is considerable. Even settled agriculturists like the Bhils and Bhilalas look to forests for most of their needs. The food that they take is constantly supplemented by the green leaves growing in the forests and the small game abounding there. In times of scarcity and distress they depend on the wild roots, tubers, barks, leaves and fruits to provide them sustenance. Among the Saharias the dependence on forests is greater as compared with the Bhils, Bhilalas, Gonds and Korkus of the State. Their love for shifting cultivation continues even to this day. Acute shortage of land for cultivation and the poor nature of tribal land in general does not make for much dependence on agriculture. In this State of landlessness and poverty they look up to the forests for their livelihood. As forest labourers and gatherers of minor forest produce they have a large stake in the forests.

Looking to the tribal economy in the State it can be said that forest for the tribesman is the only insurance against famine.

#### FORESTS IN MADHYA BHARAT

Fortunately Madhya Bharat has a large area under forests. According to the latest estimates 15,845,480 square miles is under forests.<sup>3</sup> The forest area, amounts to roughly 29.94 per cent of the total land area of the state.

CENTRAL INDIAFORESTS IN  
TRIBAL AREASLEGEND

- RESERVED FORESTS
- T TIMBER FOR BLDGS
- F FUEL WOOD CHARCOAL
- GRASS
- B BAMBOO
- G GUM

At the close of the year 1954-55 the area under different classes stood as below :

1. Reserved	7,378.434 sq. miles
2. Protected	7,594.78 sq. miles
3. Unclassed	872.266 sq. miles
Total	15,845.480 square miles

These forests are generally of the tropical deciduous type varying from teak to teak and mixed forest to almost pure stands of *Boswellia senata*, *Hardwickia binata*, and *Acacia catechu*.

The main types of forests are the following :

#### (a) *Moist Deciduous Teak Forests*

Occurring in the Kathiwara Range of the Dhar division in the Bhil belt where rainfall is 80" to 100". These forests are dense and attain large dimensions. The more important types of trees are : teak, sadad (*Terminalia tomentosa*), Semal (*Bombax malabaricum*), Mahua (*Bassia latifolia*), Dhaora (*Anogeissus latifolia*), Bija (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), Haldu (*Adina cordifolia*).

#### (b) *Dry Deciduous Teak*

These forests occur in Indore, Khargone, Kannod a major portion of Dhar and in parts of Guna Divisions. Here the rainfall varies from 25" to 40". The crop is somewhat open on hill-slopes and is dense in valleys.

These forests yield timber, fuel, fodder, grasses, gums, lac, temru leaves, mahua flowers and fruits, tanning material etc.

Except Indore the rest of the area under this type is inhabited by the tribal people—Khargone and Dhar by Bhils and Bhilalas; Kannod by Gonds and Korkus and Guna by Saharias.

#### (c) *Dry Mixed Forests*

This type exists mostly in Shivpuri, Guna, Sheopur and Gwalior Divisions where the rainfall is 20" to 35". The prominent types of tree species are kattha (*Acacia catechu*),

**Sadad, Temru** (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), **dhaora, aonla** and **bahera** etc. They yield small timber, fuel, grasses and other minor produce.

This area falls under the Saharia belt.

#### (d) *Thoru Forests*

This type exists in parts of Sheopur' and Gwalior Divisions. Here the rainfall is 15"—20". The main species are **babul** (*Acacia arabica*), **Khair**, **ber** (*Zizypus juguba*), **makora**, **tendu**, **kardpai** etc.

These forests are open, and yield fuel, grasses, gums, tanning materials etc.

This is again under the Saharia belt.

### *Forest Resources*

The Madhya Bharat is rich in its forest resources.

**Major produce :** This includes a variety of timbers and woods for fuel and charcoal. The important timbers are **Teak**, **Anjan**, **Sal**, **Khair** and **Salai**. The inferior timber species are **Semal**, **Dhao**, **Kardhai**, **Tendu**, **Mahua Arjun**, **Baheda** and **Kalam**.

The utility of these species is greatly minimised by their scattered existence. Trees not good enough for constructional timber are exploited for fuel-wood and charcoal.

**Minor produce :** The minor produce consists of a wide range of useful vegetable, animal and mineral products.

**Vegetables :** The vegetable products include bamboos and grasses, fibres, flasses, oils, distillation products, tans, dyes, gums, resins, drugs, edible fruits, leaves and poisons etc. .

**Animal products :** Among animal products the more important ones are lac, honey, wax, horns, hides and bones.

**Minerals :** Important rocks and minerals are sandstone, basalt, gneiss, granite, slate, limestone, shales, quartzite and ores of iron and manganese.

*Forests and the Scheduled Tribes—A flash back*

The Scheduled area of Madhya Bharat consists of the whole or part of the territories of eleven convening States. These states are : *Ratlam* (*Bajna tehsil*), *Sailana* (*Raoti tehsil*), *Alirajpur* (*Bhabra, Chandpur, Chhakatala, Nanpur and Rath tehsils*), *Barwani* (*Pansemal, Rajpur and Silawad parganas*), *Jhabua* (*Jhabua, Rambhapur, Ranapur and Thandla tehsil, and Umrao and minor jagirs*), *Indore* (*Nisarpur, Petlawad, Seagon and Sendhwa parganas*), *Gwalior* (*Sardarpur district*) *Dhar* (*Mandu, Kukshi and Nimanpur districts*), *Jobat* (*whole*), *Kathiwara* (*whole*), *Mathwar* (*whole*).

These States had different forest policies with regard to the tribals. In the tribal areas of the former Gwalior and Indore States a nominal commutation fee of Rupee one or two per plough-unit of land (15 acres) was charged from the tribal people. In lieu of this commutation fee the following concessions were allowed : Building timber at concessional rates for bona fide domestic use, free timber for agricultural implements, grass for thatching the roof, head loads of certain leaves for house-building, dead-wood for fuel, cart loads of minerals like stones, kankar and muram and free grazing of a pair of bullocks in the forests etc. Special areas in the forests were designated as commuted areas in which these privileges were allowed. In other States like Dhar, Alirajpur, Jhabua, Barwani, Sailana, etc. similar concessions were allowed to the tribal people.

There is a feeling among the tribal people that the concessions and privileges that they enjoyed under the princely order were much more liberal and useful than what they now enjoy. One reason behind this feeling is objectively true. Except the States of Indore, Gwalior, Barwani and Dhar most of the States had no definite scientific forest policy of continuity of management. As such, the tribals were permitted to carry on reckless felling of trees for timber and fuelwood, as well as for shifting cultivation. Secondly, the headquarters of the administra-

tive units (states) were generally at a very short distance from the different parts of the State. The people of these small States had, for generations, looked to the Central Authority for a settlement of their problems. They had got accustomed to it. The reorganisation changed the picture completely and the tribal, who, in the past, had easy access to the Ruler of the State, now found the junior executive officer a very poor substitute.

#### FOREST CONCESSIONS TO THE TRIBALS IN MADHYA BHARAT

##### *Van Nistar'*

'*Van Nistar'* refers to the concessions in the former princely States, under which certain groups of villages in or near the forest areas, were allowed to enjoy the forest produce required for their bonafide use, in lieu of nominal fees paid by them to the Government annually. We have seen that the tribal people were affected greatly by the *van nistar* system prevalent in the various areas. After the creation of Madhya Bharat the different systems of *van nistar* continued to be in force in the various parts of the State. Broadly these systems could be summarised as under :

1. *Haqdari*, and
2. *Commutation system*.

*Haqdari* is derived from the word *Haq* meaning the right. It refers to the special rights enjoyed by certain villagers over the forest produce. Such villages were known as *Haqdari* villages. This system was prevalent in the former Gwalior State and goes as far back as 1910 when the reserved forests were created. At that time, the then Government, created some *Hakdar* villages and vested them with rights to use certain forest produce for their own bonafide use for a nominal annual fee. The rights so granted came to be known as *Haqdari*. Under the *Haqdari* the haqdars could get useful wood from the *muafi* (free) coupes. *Haqdars* were entitled to headloads of fuelwood and grass free of charge from the Reserve Forests. Non-

*haqdars*, theoretically had no such right. But in practice anybody could get these articles in headloads free of cost. The animals belonging to the *haqdars* were provided grazing in Reserve Forests at half the rates normally charged from the *non-haqdars*. *Haqdars* were allowed to graze one buffalo, two bullocks, heifers and colts and the riding pony free of cost per every ten rupees of land revenue. From Protected Forests the *haqdars* could meet all their agricultural requirements from specified trees.

*Commutation system* was prevalent in the former Indore State and was adopted as far back as 1906. It is also known as *Halbandi* or *Halot*. Under this system the payee was entitled to remove from the specified forests certain kinds of forest produce on payment of a stipulated nominal fee once a year. This was designated as commutation fee. The fee was nominal and much below the value of the produce removed by the commuters. The commuters in practice, used to get all the wood and other forest produce they required for agricultural purposes from the Reserve Forests. This was against the provision that these requirements were to be met from *Abadi* forests. This led to a destruction of forest wealth.

#### *Nistar Committee*

In 1953 the State Government appointed two committees for the northern and southern conservancies of the forest for making the *Nistar* rights and privileges uniform throughout the State. The aim was to stop the system of commutation and adopt a uniform schedule for both the conservancies. This Committee felt that as the forests were a national wealth they ought to be used for the common benefit of all. It agreed that the forest populations would continue to make greater use of the forests. But it was against the recognition of many special rights in the forests. The Committee recommended that in the course of next five years the special rights should be gradually abolished. At the same time the Committee recommended that the provision should be made to supply the required forest produce to the cultivators at the normal

rate. Before the *Haqdari* and commutation systems are abolished steps should be taken to supply the normal forest requirements of the villagers at a reasonable distance. This, in the view of the Committee, would put an end to the illicit felling of trees.

### *Abolition of Special Rights*

In 1954<sup>s</sup> the Government abolished the *Haqdari* and the Commutation systems. The Government also published a Schedule of rates for various forest produce as well as the rates of grazing to make the *nistar* rights common throughout the State. The existing *Haqdari* and Commutation rights shall lapse in 1959.

The special concessional rates of grazing prevalent in the Scheduled Area would also be abolished in 1959. The special facilities given for grazing in Jhabua would continue till the next settlement. But the tribal cooperative societies would continue to get bamboos and other raw materials for cottage industries at half the rates.

With a view to give economic relief to the tribals the Government decided in 1954 to allow them, together with general forest population, to extract a number of minor forest produce free of royalty. The list of articles not allowed to be used gratis is as follows :

#### *Bhil belt :*

1. Khargone Division—Gums, honey, wax, lac, temru leaves, rosha grass.
2. Dhar—Gums, honey, wax, temru leaves, mahua flowers and fruits, rosha grass.

#### *Gond-Korku belt :*

Nemawar—Temru leaves, rosha grass.

#### *Saharia belt :*

1. Shivpuri—Lac, katha, honey, wax, temru leaves, gums, rosha grass.
2. Guna—Lac, katha, honey, wax, temru leaves, gums, rosha grass.

3. Sheopur—Katha, honey, wax, temru leaves, gums, rossha, oil.

New rate schedule of forest produce is as given below:

Produce	Quantity	Rates
		Rs. As. P.
1. Fuel wood	Per cart load of dry wood (For big cities)	1 0 0 2 0 0
	Per head load of dry wood (For small towns)	0 2 0 0 1 0
2. Thorns	Per cart load	0 4 0
3. Suvari, nirgu and Khajur leaves	Per cart load Per head load	2 0 0 0 2 0
	For cottage industries	Per cart load
4. Tendu leaves	Per md.	0 12 0
5. Gums (Babul) Katha	" "	1 0 0 7 8 0 5 0 0
Kare	"	10 0 0
Salaveed	"	5 0 0
6. Wax	"	10 0 0
7. Hing	"	5 0 0
8. Lac	"	10 0 0
9. Katha	"	25 0 0
10. Rosha oil	"	100 0 0
11. Aritha	"	2 0 0
12. Barks (Anjan)	"	1 0 0
13. SemaI lint	"	5 0 0

Thus we see that two things have happened to the forest rights of the tribal people. One, most of the rights and privileges they had been enjoying in the forests were suddenly restricted on creation of the Madhya Bharat. Under the new system of forest administration it was hard for the tribals to get the forest produce for their household needs and for barter, as such permissions were not granted by the officers on the spot. Getting permission from higher officers located at distant places meant great deal of time and money. The supervision, now, also became more

strict. Every encroachment was now a punishable act under the new Forest Law. Secondly, the *van nistar* committee prohibited the free use of most of the articles. Perhaps except dead wood and grass no other forest produce could be had gratis.

This, naturally, means a great economic handicap to the tribals. The things they used to get free have now been priced. And even at the high rates fixed it is not possible for them to get the forest produce in the quantity needed and at the time desired.

#### *Tongya Cultiration :*

- Another forest policy namely Tongya cultivation also touches the forest dwelling tribals quite considerably, particularly the landless persons.

- Tongya (or Taungya) cultivation is the practice of allowing a cultivator to cultivate a piece of land for a certain number of years in return for planting of young forest trees. Tongya system was first evolved in Burma. In the Burmese Tongyâ literally means hill cultivation. It has been defined as a scientific method of raising plantation with field crops under skilled control generally on level or moderately sloping grounds. In Madhya Bharat it has been defined as "the raising of crop of trees of forest species in conjunction with agriculture in a given plot of land."

In Madhya Bharat roughly 27,670 acres of land is available in the forest areas which is clear of forest trees. The forest villages also have nearly 2,19,771 acres of fallow land which can be safely utilized for either new forest plantations or agricultural purposes.

This land is being distributed for a period of six years for Taungya cultivation. The land is being allotted on a temporary lease on the basis of one ploughland (about 15 acres) per family. The preference is being given to the landless tribals, Harijans and other backward class peoples. Each lessee is being provided with a pair of bullocks and necessary agricultural implements. The rent for 15 acres of land for six years has been fixed as Rs. 15/- only.

Except the nominal rent the conditions of lease are quite rigorous. In the first year of lease the lessee is required to fell all the deformed and useless trees in his holding. He is allowed to a clear 3 acres of land for his own use and may sow it with kharif or rabi. Next year the land cleared and cultivated by him shall be used for afforestation. The rest of the plot he can clear again and cultivate. The labour for digging one foot wide and one foot deep seedling lines is to be provided by the cultivator free of cost. The maintenance and weeding of the seedling lines is also a responsibility of the lessee. Next year again 3 acres of cultivated land is used for silvicultural purposes. This progressing, his cultivated area keeps on diminishing and the labour requirements keep on increasing. After the expiry of the lease the agriculturist is again landless. The hard labour he puts into the clearing and cultivation of this piece is of no use to him. Nor is this system found to be consistent with greater yields. Moreover, the rules of Taungya cultivation place restrictions on the growing of certain crops like makka and sugar-cane which may compete with forest seedlings. Particularly the restriction on makka is resented by the Bhil and the Bhilala cultivators for whom makka is the staple food.

As a result of these features the system has not found favour with the tribal people. It is doubtful if this system can help to solve the problem of the landless tribals. At best Taungya cultivation can give some relief to the landless for a very short period. From the point of view of the broad pattern of tribal economy the Taungya cultivation does not touch even the fringe of the problem.

### *Forest Crimes*

The forests in the State are administered under various Acts.<sup>6</sup>

Any act done in contravention of the above Acts becomes a forest crime. The sudden change in the rules and regulations of the forest administration without any consideration of the needs of the tribals has created an acute problem. What the tribal had come to regard as

perfectly legitimate and rightful by long usage and custom, over-night became an illegal act punishable by law. The normal pursuance for food gathering and collection of minor produce has become a crime which the ignorant and poor tribal cannot comprehend. There is no effort to explain this change in values to him. Nor does he know of any alternatives that may substitute the freedom of the wilds he had been enjoying since centuries.

Tightening of the forest administration is slowly leading to an increase in the violations of the new rules. Looking to the State as a whole the forest crime position was as follows :

TABLE I

FOREST CRIME IN THE STATE OF MADHYA BHARAT FOR 2 YEARS

Years	Injury Felling by fire	Grazing	Under Games Act	Other offences	Total
1949-50	48	3,487	1,141	19	191
1954-55	4	6,116	1,073	4	2,585

The table shows that the crimes are on the increase. As far as the nature of the forest crimes is concerned, the most common type is the unauthorised felling of trees and unauthorised grazing of cattle in the reserved areas. The fellings are of trees useful as timber and wood both. They are mostly taken for agricultural and home use, and very rarely for commercial purposes. The system of permits and restrictions on the use of certain blocks for fellings may be very necessary and even useful from the point of view of silviculture. But it does not accord with the economic requirements and practises of the tribal people. The wood and other forest produce they are allowed to get does not suffice for their purposes. They are willing to pay more than the stipulated fee for getting their normal requirements. Whenever they fail to get permits they throw the law to the winds and take to the axe.

Grazing crimes are explained by shortage of sufficient pasture land near about villages. Gaming offences are few because the tribal likes the fowl and goat for his food. He is not interested in the game generally prohibited.

The problem of the rise in the crime rate is very closely connected with the economic condition of the people living in or near the forest areas. In good years these crimes go down. In years of scarcity the crimes go up. This is indicated by the above table. The year 1949-50 mentioned in the table was a normal year. The year 1953-54 was the year following two years of scarcity and famine. And we see the number of crimes shooting up in the bad year as compared to a normal or good year. But, as generally a good year in these areas is a rare phenomenon and bad year the rule, the crime rate is usually high.

### *Causes of High Crime Rate*

The economic pattern of the tribal areas has remained the same. Therefore the high rate of crimes should be the effect of some other cause. The biggest cause as we have mentioned earlier, is the changed forest administration which has restricted the freedom of the tribal *vis a vis* the use of forests. The Rulers of the former States were the absolute masters of the forests and the forests were treated as their personal property, where no adverse rights existed. In some States the people in general and the tribal people in particular were granted very liberal forest concessions. The new administration of Madhya Bharat views the forest as a source of revenue to the State, and has regularised and restricted the rights of the tribals. Red tape, bureaucracy and sometimes the desire of illegal gratification led the forest staff to delay the granting of permits for the supply of timber and wood etc. The non-availability of these essentials on time even after the tribal was willing to pay for them, created great difficulties for him. Three reasons are generally advanced for the upward trends in the illicit fellings.<sup>7</sup>

1. "Criminally minded" people resort to illicit fellings because they are forced to do so due to the persisting scarcity conditions in order to maintain their livelihood.
2. They find it the easiest method of earning a living.
3. Undesirable elements encourage them to do so.

These forests areas are mostly inhabited by the Bhils and Bhilalas. It is admitted even by the forest authorities that due to low fertility of land and poverty, under unavoidable circumstances the tribals resort to illicit fellings."<sup>13</sup>

It is not accurate to explain the illicit fellings as due to criminal mindedness! Habitually the tribals are not so. In years of distress their very existence depends on the forests. In the form of wild berries, roots, leaves and barks the hungry tribals get sustenance from the forests. As a source of income and employment also the collection and sale of forest produce helps them earn an income, so indispensable for their very existence. The tribal regards forests as his very own. Not only his food but also his gods and spirits are derived from it. The way he regards the forests is very well illustrated by a very interesting practice among the Saharias. At the time of the marriage of his daughter a Saharia will bequeath a certain forest to her. This forest he shall never use for his requirements. He would regard it strictly a property of his daughter and son-in-law, and as such it would be a taboo to him.

The forests are an important factor in balancing the economy of the tribal, whether he be a cultivator or a labourer. It is his only security against a bad year or unemployment. To be declared a criminal for doing what he has been doing for generations without let and hindrance fails the comprehension of the unsophisticated tribal.

The other aspect of the problem is more tragic and alarming. Instances are plenty when a contractor eggs the ignorant and unsuspecting tribal to do the felling knowing full well that what he is commissioning him for is an illegal act. The process is simple. The contractor gets hold of a tribal. Asks him to supply him the wood of a particular

tree from a block that does not belong to him. The tribal commences the felling and if apprehended he comes under the heavy axe of the law. The contractor who instigated him and who stood to gain the most, does not figure anywhere in the charge-sheet.

Thus the forest crime is a misnomer. It is an indication of the wrong forest policy which has ignored the welfare of the tribal altogether. Tribal welfare and the sound forest management on the principle of sustained yields are not inconsistent.

### *Forest Policy*

Despite the presence of good deal of forest wealth in the State the tribal people continue to be in very bad plight. Forest wealth worth 61 lakhs of rupees should be a good source of subsidiary income. Agriculture and forest taken together should have given to the tribal people gainful employment throughout the year with sufficiently high incomes. But this is not so. The forest wealth either fills the coffers of the State or increases the bank balance of the contractor. As wage-earner the tribal gets very little out of the natural wealth that is a part of his habitat and environment.

This problem is intimately related to the method of utilization of the forest produce.

### *Utilization*

The forest produce is utilized by the following agencies:

a. Departmental agency.

b. Purchasers.

The departmental agency exploits some forest coupes only. The major part of the exploitation is done by the purchasers. The Forest Department sets apart coupes for utilization which are put to auction. The highest bidder gets the lease of the coupe for the season. The major forest produce is utilized in this manner through the agency of the purchasers. These purchasers are generally moneyed people who employ the tribal people to work for them as labourers. The utilization of forests through auctions,

thus, brings the contractors on the scene. On the one hand that means restrictions of the rights and privileges of the tribals in the forests. On the other hand it leads to exploitation of the tribal labour.<sup>19</sup> This is an experience common to all tribal areas. Aiyappan, reporting on the socio-economic conditions of the aboriginal tribes in Madras Province, says, "The Forest Department can do a lot for the tribes. It is the duty of the Department to help the tribesmen in their own interests to be more efficient and to be better off economically. If more forest work is done departmentally the Government themselves would become the largest employer of tribal labour, and the contractor will not be in a position to exploit them".<sup>10</sup> On the basis of his wide experience Aiyappan makes a strong recommendation for the Departmental management, particularly of minor produce.<sup>11</sup> Grigson, the Aboriginal Tribes Enquiry Officer in the C.P., writing on the conditions prevailing in the C.P. recommends that "Departmental working should replace contracts wherever possible, and a clause should be inserted in Forest Contracts prescribing minimum wages for forest labourers."<sup>12</sup> In Madhya Bharat there is neither a large volume of departmental working of the forests nor is there any safeguard of a fair wage to the tribal labour. The contractor is the master of the forest block for the season and he pays the wages he likes. Bahadur, Dey and Ramaswamy suggest, "if the backward classes are to be benefitted, the existing system should be changed".<sup>13</sup> There is unanimity on the adverse effect the system of auction is having on the economy of the tribesmen. The system of contracts has turned the tribal labour as virtual slaves. But there appears to be a good deal of difference of opinion regarding the substitution of the forest contractors with the Departmental mode of working. The Departmental workings, unfortunately, have been marked by the ill-treatment of the tribals by the petty officials of the Forest Department. The funds allotted are not properly used. Embezzlements and misuse of the funds are also not uncommon. Constituted as the department is at present, it gives no hope of serving the interests of the tribal any better.

Moreover, even if the Department could successfully undertake this work, it would fail to generate among the tribals that spirit of independence and mutual help and thrift which is so essential for their regeneration and revitalization. The Department may, if ideally worked, provide various types of amenities like medical care, education, recreation etc. in a shorter time. But the tribal will continue to look to others for his needs. Not merely the economic welfare but also the social and political welfare as well calls for the creation of co-operative institution to undertake this responsibility.

State has made experiments in the cooperative utilisation of forest produce in the Sheopur Forest Division. These experiments have not been very successful. There have been two major handicaps leading to the failure of the most of these attempts :

1. Technical nature of the business, and
2. Unreliable personnel.

The highly technical nature of marketing of forest produce led to the failure of some co-operative ventures of the Saharia societies in the Sheopur district. The society made the mistake of stocking a large amount of the produce, particularly Gums. But the market price suddenly went down. The society ran into a big loss in the very initial years of its work when it had no reserves to absorb the shock.

The other defect has been the wrong type of persons who come into such societies. These unscrupulous elements bank on the ignorance of the tribal and exploit him.

These defects are inherent in co-operation in general and the tribal co-operative in particular. The answer will lie, perhaps, in quasi-co-operatives operating in areas smaller than that allotted usually to the contractors, with a strict Government supervision and control and liberal financing by the Government.

Bombay State has recently seen some excellent experiments in Forest Labourers Co-operative Societies.<sup>14</sup> Referring to the successful experiments made by Bombay in

this field the First Five Year Plan suggests, "It should be the object of State policy throughout India to organise the tribes into co-operatives for the collection of forest produce, and for this a phased programme should be drawn up."<sup>15</sup> Defining the role of forest departments the Plan lays down that the responsibility of organising the tribal forest co-operatives should lie on the shoulders of the Forest Department.<sup>16</sup>

In its lucid exposition of the forest policy *vis a vis* the tribal people the Second Plan envisages the exploitation of the forest wealth with due consideration to the economic welfare of the tribal people. The Plan lays down, "It is desirable that tribal communities should be made the primary agents for the care and development of the forests and the exploitation of forest resources."<sup>17</sup>

## CHAPTER VII LABOUR

### *Size of Tribal Labour*

It has been seen in our discussion on the pattern of livelihood in the tribal communities that Agricultural class accounted for 95.58 per cent of the total tribal population in the State in 1951. The owner cultivators and the tenant cultivators between themselves formed 80.56 per cent of the tribal population. The cultivating labourers formed 14.62 per cent of the total tribal population. These cultivating labourers or agricultural labourers form the largest sector of tribal labour in Madhya Bharat.<sup>1</sup> Another sector of tribal labour is contributed by forests. The livelihood class V of the 1951 census includes forestry and other productive industries. We have 21,311 persons in this livelihood class. Of the total tribal population this forms 2.01 per cent. In Madhya Bharat there are no industries among tribals, hence we can safely assume that 2.01 per cent mostly represents the proportion of tribal people engaged in forests as labourers. People engaged in transport in 1951 were 711 or 0.07 per cent of the total tribal population. These were also mostly labourers.

Thus the census statistics of 1951 reveal the following strength of tribal labour :

TABLE I

No.	Type of labour	Total Number of persons	Percentage of total tribal population
1.	Agricultural Labour	1,55,123	14.62
2	Forest Labour	21,311	2.01
3.	Transport Labour	711	0.07
Total		1,77,145	16.70

The table shows that roughly 1,77,145 or 16.70 per cent of tribal population is engaged in various types of labour. Of this tribal labour force nearly 87 per cent is agricultural labour. The rest of the labour, including forest and

transport, accounts for only 13 per cent of the total tribal labour.

This position, as revealed by the table given above, is based on the census returns dealing with the principal occupations. These persons whose secondary occupation is agricultural labour or forestry, although they have some land of their own, do not find any place in the above statistics. These statistics, therefore, do not reveal the complete picture. It has to be corrected in the light of the characteristics of the tribal economic pattern.

Agriculture being the main industry in the tribal areas, the scope for agricultural and other types of labour is largely determined by the state of agriculture. Size of holdings, fertility of land and the crops grown have created a peculiar position for the labour in tribal areas. Small cultivator with uneconomic holdings finds it necessary to supplement his low income by working on the farms of other farmers as casual labour. Even in the kharif season he has many off days when he can work as casual agricultural labour and earn something. Most of the small cultivators have nothing to do after the kharif is harvested. The forest season also starts about this time and lasts almost till the onset of the monsoons in May. He generally devotes his energies to forest in the rest of the months. But since he is a landholder, he is classified in the livelihood class I or II of the 1951 census, reserved for landholding cultivators. There is quite a large part of tribal agricultural population which is engaged on forest works. It is not possible to give a quantitative estimate of the size of labour that is engaged on land and forests, though not included in the census statistics for the reasons mentioned above. But it must be quite considerable. It would be safe to suggest that the size of tribal labour is much larger than 16.70 per cent of the total tribal population.

### *Classification,*

Tribal labour may be classified into following main classes :

- (i) Agricultural

- (ii) Forest
- (iii) Mining
- (iv) Miscellaneous including road and transport labour.

As we have seen, undoubtedly the agricultural labour is by far the most numerous. Second in strength is forest labour. Mining labour and other types of labour contribute small shares to the total tribal labour force.

### AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

Agricultural labour is engaged for various types of agricultural operations. There is a sexual division of labour in agriculture, based on superstitions and physical capacity. No tribal can ever imagine entrusting ploughing to women. It is considered to be a sure precursor of bad luck. But women are preferred for sowing. It is believed that sowing by women brings greater fertility. Generally men do the heavier types of jobs and women and children are given the lighter and less arduous ones. The distribution of work on this basis is broadly the following :

*Men* : Ploughing, embanking, harrowing, manuring, fencing, sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting and threshing.

*Women* : Sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting and threshing.

*Children* are given lighter jobs, the same as given to women. They work as cowherds looking after the cattle and other livestock when they are sent out for grazing.

#### *Types of Agricultural Labour*

Agricultural labour is of two types :

- (a) casual, and
- (b) attached.

(a) *Casual*—Casual labour is that labour which is employed from day to day to undertake a particular piece of work. The casual workers are employed on time wage as well as the piece wage. The payment is either in cash or in kind, but without perquisites.

In the State as a whole (for all population) the casual labour formed 83 per cent of the agricultural labour in 1950-51.<sup>1</sup> The tribal population would show a much lower percentage of casual labour. The pattern of landholdings in the Bhil belt is such that landless people are fewer as compared to the State as a whole. But casual labour is not absent in the overwhelmingly tribal tracts of the belt contrary to what is suggested by the Report on Agricultural Labour Enquiry.<sup>2</sup>

Taking the various tribal communities into consideration, casual labour is relatively much less in the Bhils and the Bhilalas. It is considerable in the Gonds and the Korkus. And it is probably highest among the Saharias.

(b) *Attached* : Attached labour is labour under a contract of employment, usually for a whole year, but sometimes for 6 months and even shorter.<sup>4</sup> Attached labour is paid either in cash with perquisites or in kind with or without perquisites.

Taking the State as a whole (all population) attached workers formed 12.7 per cent of the total wage earners in the State in 1950-61. But the proportion of attached workers is much higher among the tribal people. It is highest among the Bhils and the Bhilalas.

The attached labour goes by the term *Hali* in the Bhil belt. Sometimes it is termed as *Barsood* also. In the Saharia belt the attached labour is termed as *Mahidar*. In Gond-Korku belt it goes by the name of *Hali*.

The attached labour is employed by richer cultivators with large holdings. In the Saharia belt the *Mahidars* are generally engaged by the caste Hindus and other rich agricultural communities such as Kachhis, Kirars and Lodhis. In the Bhil-belt, the *hali* is engaged by Sirvis, Sondhias and rich Bhilalas. Bhils in this belt supply the largest number of *halis*. In the Gond-Korku belt, it is the Korku who is mostly engaged as a *hali*.

The contract is generally made on the *Akhatiz* in April-May. Women and children are generally not employed as attached labour, and are free to pursue their occupation

independently. Children of the attached worker's family are also outside the scope of the contract.

Generally the attached labour is advanced loans, in cash or kind, before contract. Sometimes, as in Gond-Korku belt, 25% to 50% interest per annum is charged on the loan. In the Saharia belt a *mahidar* becomes a virtual serf as a result of this practice. Once a loan is contracted from the *Zamindar* (now the *Chakdar*) the Saharia is forced to work as attached labour on a nominal monthly salary. There were instances where this kind of serfdom had forced several generations of Saharias to work for the same *mahidar* to pay back the dues. In case the attached worker absents himself from duty, a proportionate deduction is made from his wages. The attached worker is generally not provided with living space. This he has to arrange himself. His hours of work are not fixed, nor is his job restricted to one work. He does any job his master asks him to do.

Generally the rates of wages are somewhat lower in case of attached workers as compared to casual workers.

### *Hours of Work*

Generally hours of work are smaller for the casual labour as compared to the attached labour. The hours of work are shorter in some operation and longer in some. Ordinarily the working day consists of eight hours. In ploughing, harrowing, manuring and weeding the hours of work are 8 or 9. But in sowing the hours of work are from 10 to 11. Longer hours of work in sowing are due to two facts. One : the work is light, therefore longer hours are possible. Second : the nature of sowing is such that it must be done under most ideal soil conditions. These conditions change considerably within small periods. Therefore as soon as the ideal conditions appear, the whole sowing is completed as quickly as possible by working in long stretches.

The hours of work vary with the mode of payment. It is generally observed that when labour is employed on cash wages with perquisites the working hours are longer

as compared to cases where the wages are paid in cash without perquisites. This is probably due to the fact that cash with perquisites is more substantial than cash without perquisites. Cash with perquisites is generally preferred to cash without perquisites. Hours of work are much higher for the attached labour. They are treated as full time workers. Their hours of work extend from 12 to 16. The usual hours of work are 12. The working day begins at 6 and continues till sunset, and sometimes longer.

### *Wages*

Wages vary from belt to belt and in the same belt from area to area. Wages differ for different operations. Wages of the casual labour differ from those of the attached labour. Wages are paid in cash as well as in kind. They are paid with perquisites or without perquisites. Wages in kind are more common at the time of harvest. At other times cash wages are a rule.

### *Casual Labour*

In the Jhabua district the casual labour is paid at the following rate :

TABLE II

No.	Name of the Operation	W A G E S		
		Men Rs.As.P.	Women Rs.As.P.	Children Rs.As.P.
1.	Ploughing	0 12 0	—	—
2.	Preparatory operations	0 12 0	—	—
3.	Embanking	0 10 0	0 8 0	Nil
4.	Harrowing	0 12 0	Nil	Nil
5.	Manuring	0 12 0	0 8 0	Nil
6.	Sowing	1 0 0	0 12 0	Nil
7.	Transplanting	1 0 0	0 12 0	Nil
8.	Weeding	0 12 0	0 12 0	0 8 0
9.	Harvesting	1 0 0	0 12 0	0 8 0
10.	Threshing	1 0 0	0 12 0	0 8 0

In Nimar in general the wages paid to casual labour are lower as indicated by the table below :

TABLE III

No.	Name of the Operation	W A G E S		
		Men Rs.As.P.	Women Rs.As.P.	Children Rs.As.P.
1.	Ploughing	0 12 0	—	—
2.	Manuring	0 10 0	—	—
3.	Sowing	0 12 0	0 8 0	—
4.	Transplanting	—	0 8 0	0 6 0
5.	Weeding	—	0 5 0	0 4 0
6.	Harvesting	0 14 0	0 14 0	0 6 0
7.	Threshing	0 10 0	0 14 0	0 6 0
8.	Other Operations	0 12 0	0 14 0	0 6 0

But in the tehsil Sendhwa of the district Nimar the wages were found to be higher. This may probably be due to the fact that this is a relatively rich groundnut, cotton and wheat tract.

In Saharia belt the daily rates of wages are as given in the table below :

TABLE IV

No.	Name of the Operation	W A G E S		
		Men Rs.As.P.	Women Rs.As.P.	Children Rs.As.P.
1.	Ploughing	0 10 0	—	—
2.	Embanking	0 10 0	—	—
3.	Harrowing	0 10 0	—	—
4.	Sowing	0 12 0	0 10 0	0 6 0
5.	Transplanting	0 10 0	0 8 0	0 6 0
6.	Weeding	0 10 0	0 8 0	0 6 0
7.	Harvesting	0 10 0	0 8 0	0 6 0
8.	Threshing	—	0 8 0	0 6 0

In the Gond-Korku belt the casual labour is paid at the following rates :

TABLE V

No.	Name of the	W A G E S		
		Men Rs.As.P.	Women Rs.As.P.	Children Rs.As.P.
1.	Ploughing	0 8 0	—	—
2.	Embanking	0 8 0	—	—
3.	Harrowing	0 8 0	—	—
4.	Manuring	0 8 0	—	—
5.	Sowing	0 8 0	0 8 0	0 6 0
6.	Transplanting	0 8 0	0 8 0	0 6 0
7.	Weeding	0 8 0	0 8 0	0 6 0
8.	Irrigating	0 8 0	—	—
9.	Harvesting	0 8 0	—	—

It is seen from the tables given above that the wages are lowest in the Gond-Korku belt. Between Saharia and the Bhil belts the latter shows a slightly higher wage rate. The variations in the daily wages of the casual labour are quite considerable. For men they range from As. 8 to Re 1 per day. For women they vary from annas 4 per day to Re. 1 a day. The wages for children are roughly half of the wages for men. The highest wage rate obtains for the operation of sowing, harvesting and threshing. The wage rate touches the lowest point for the operation of weeding.

#### *Attached Labour*

Attached labour is generally paid in cash or kind with perquisites. In Jhabua the rates of payment is as follows :

## (i) Men

Period of Contract	Wages in cash or kind	Cash value of meals	Perquisites and their Cash value
Six months	3 mds. of grain cash value Rs. 30/-	Two meals daily. Cash value -/5/- per day	1 Shoe 5/- 1 Dhoti 5/- 1 Turban 6/- 1 Loin-cloth -/8/-
Total wage	Rs. 103/- for 6 months		

Women and children are rarely employed. But when and if they are employed the rate of payment is as follows :—

## (ii) Women

Period of employment	Wages in cash or kind	Cash value of meals	Perquisites and their Cash value
6 months	2½ mds. of grain cash value Rs. 25/-	Two meals per day cash value -/3/- per day cash value Rs. 33/12/-	1 Dhoti 5/- 1 Ghagra 8/- cash value Rs. 13/-
Total cash value	Rs. 72/12/-		

## (iii) Children

Period of employment	Wages in cash or in kind	Cash value of meals	Perquisites and their Cash value
Six months	2 mds. of grain cash value Rs. 20/-	Two meals daily cash value -/3/-	1 Shoe 3/- 1 Dhoti 3/- 1 Turban 3/- 1 Loin-cloth -/8/-
Total cash value	Rs. 63/4/-		

On a daily basis the wage rate would be :  
 Men — Approximately As. -/9/-

Women — Approximately	As. -/6/3
Children — Approximately	As. -/5/7

In the Saharia belt the attached labour is paid at the rates Rs. 15 per month with 2 meals a day and 2 dhotis (Rs. 7/8/-), 1 pair of shoes (Rs. 5/-/-), 2 shirts Rs. 3/- and 1 turban (Rs. 4/-) annually. If the value of meals is As. 4 per day the total annual cash wage would amount to Rs. 289/8/-. It would give a daily wage of roughly As. 13.

In the Gond-Korku belt the attached labour is generally not contracted on long terms. The settlement is mostly on monthly basis. The usual rate is Rs. 15/- per month or annas eight per day. If the payment is in kind, it is generally related to its cash value. If the rate of jowar is Rs. 10/- per maund, the wage in kind would be fixed at  $1\frac{1}{2}$  maunds of jowar per month. In this area no perquisites are given to the attached labour.

In respect of attached labour we find that the rates are higher in the Saharia belt as compared to the other two belts. They are lowest in the Gond-Korku belt.

### *Wage Legislation*

The Minimum Wages Committee appointed by the Government of Madhya Bharat dealt at length with the advisability of wage legislation for agricultural labour. After considering the various pros and cons of the problem the Committee felt that, "Even as an ameliorative measure calculated to raise the standard of living of the rural community, the fixation of minimum wages in respect of agricultural workers does not appear to be feasible under the existing conditions".<sup>5</sup> The Committee argued that an artificial wage rise would raise the prices of the agricultural commodities. As the agricultural worker spends about 81 per cent of his income on food, he would suffer most as a result of higher cost of living. Raising of the wages through legislation may swell the ranks of agricultural labour, as many a small cultivator would consider it more profitable to be a wage earner rather than a petty cultivator. This will increase the supply of labour and depress their wages.

### FOREST LABOUR

It is not possible to give an estimate of the exact number of tribal people engaged as forest labourers. But it must be quite considerable, next only to agricultural labour.

The forest works are of two types : (a) Permanent works, and (b) Temporary works. Most of the tribal labour is engaged on temporary works.

#### *Avenues of Employment*

The tribal labour is engaged in forests on the following jobs :—

1. Felling the trees
2. Stocking the forest material at coupe sites or at the depot.
3. Removing the forest material
4. Skinning the forest material
5. Sawing timber
6. Erection of charcoal kilns and manufacture of charcoal
7. Collecting and stocking grass
8. Collection of gum
9. Picking of temru leaves and packing it in bundles
10. Carting the above material to the market place
11. Cutting boundary lines of coupes
12. Erecting pillars
13. Survey of coupes
14. Repairs to buildings
15. Tile burning work
16. White-washing work
17. Repairs to roads, wells and ziras
18. Ploughing
19. Preparing beds and other seasonal operations for plantation work
20. Thinning work, cutting inter-fire-lines, demarcation line and boundary lines repairing the old and existing pillars.
21. Erecting new pillars, carting the material to the spot.
22. Preparation of charcoal
23. Transportation of timber

24. Fire protection
25. Coupe sandle-wood guards
26. Palwa cutting
27. Nursery and plantation work
28. Collection of minor produce

### *Tribal and Non-tribal Labour*

The labour employed by forest department and the contractors is both tribal and non-tribal. The non-tribal labour is generally drawn from backward classes. The tribal labour forms a larger portion of the forest divisions as shown in the table below :

TABLE VI  
PROPORTION OF TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL LABOUR EMPLOYED  
AT FOREST WORKS (1955)

No.	Forest division	Total labour employed in the year	Tribal labour employed	Percentage of tribal labour of the total labour.
<i>Bhil belt</i>				
1	Khargone	4,61,988	2,75,800	60
2	Dhar	26,840	14,090	52
<i>Saharia belt</i>				
3	Guna	15,708	12,993	82
4	Sheopur	8,355	6,780	80
5	Shivpuri	16,250	9,575	58
<i>Gond-Korku belt</i>				
6	Kannod	2,10,410	90,600	43

In Khargone and Dhar in the Bhil belt, 60 and 52 per cent of labour respectively is tribal. Thus 56 per cent of the labour in this belt is tribal. In the Saharia belt even larger proportion of labour is tribal. In Guna the tribal labour forms 82 per cent, in Sheopur 80 per cent and in Shivpuri 58 per cent. Taking the belt as a whole the tribal labour forms 73 per cent of the total labour. In the Gond-Korku belt the tribal labour forms only 43 per cent of the total labour.

The high percentage of tribal labour in the Saharia belt is quite natural. The acute landlessness among the Saharias and lack of other means of employment leave no alternative but to join the ranks of forest labour. Relatively, the Bhil and the Bhilala is more favourably placed. He has more land and therefore forest is less lucrative to him than it is to the Saharia. The low percentage in the Gond-Korku belt is probably due to the fact that the tribal population here is rather small. It forms a very small fraction of the total volume of forest labour required.

### *Nature of Employment*

The nature of forest work is highly seasonal. The forest season opens after the rain by the month of October or November and ends before the onset of rains by the month of April or May. The main season lasts for nearly 4 months only. Because of the seasonal nature of the occupation the employment offered is mostly temporary. The table below gives the figures of the temporary and permanent forest labour in the various forest divisions in the various tribal belts :

TABLE VII  
NATURE OF FOREST EMPLOYMENT IN THE VARIOUS FOREST DIVISION IN THE TRIBAL AREAS (1955)

No.	Forest division and tribal belt	Total labour employed in the year	Permanent labour	Temporary labour	Percentage of temporary labour of the total labour
<i>Bhil belt</i>					
1	Khargone	4,61,988	5,275	4,56,714	98.9
2	Dhar	26,840	12,000	14,840	59.6
<i>Saharia belt</i>					
3	Guna	15,708	978	14,730	93.8
4	Sheopur	8,355	6,155	2,200	26.4
5	Shivpuri	16,250	NIL	16,250	100.0
<i>Gond-Korku belt</i>					
6	Kannod	2,10,410	NIL	2,10,410	100.0

The table shows that in Khargone division (in Nimar) the temporary labour forms 98.9 per cent of the total labour force. In Dhar division 59.6 per cent of labour was of a temporary nature. In the Saharia belt only Sheopur division shows a high percentage of permanent labour, with temporary labour forming 26.4 per cent of the total labour. This is more than made up by Shivpuri division where the cent per cent labour is temporary. In Gond-Korku belt all the labour is temporary.

Taking the state as a whole (for the divisions mentioned above) the temporary labour forms 79.6 per cent of the total labour force. The above figures relate to the labour employed by the Forest Department. We do not have relevant statistics for the labour employed by contractors. But the general pattern is the same. As a matter of fact temporary labour would form much higher proportion in case of the labour under contractors. The forest contractor is interested in the forests so far as the exploitation of the timber and other produce is concerned. As the period of work is seasonal he does not contract labour for long period. Moreover, the tribal himself does not like to be bound for even monthly contracts. His love for his home, and generally some stake in land, comes in way of his working on permanent basis.

### *Wages*

In the different forest divisions of the state different rates of wages prevail for different jobs. The wages are always in kind so far as the forest department is concerned. The contractors sometimes give wages in cash as well as in kind. But they prefer giving cash wages.

The piece wage is more common. But sometimes time wage is also given. Range of wages paid is between As. -/8/- to Rs. 2 per day per adult male. Child labour is paid at the rate of As. -/6/- to As. -/8/-, while girls are paid at the rate of As. -/5/- to As. -/6/-.

The rates of wages paid for the various jobs are given below:--

### *Piece Wages*

- (i) *Collection of Grass* : Rs. 6/4/- per 1,000 lbs. As. -/9/- per mile per 1,000 lbs. for carting.
- (ii) *Cutting and Felling* : Payment made according to the quality and quantity of wood cut.
- (iii) *Marking Pillars and Cutting Boundary Lines* : Rs. 5/- per piller.
- (iv) *Cutting of Line per mile* : Rs. 20/-.
- (v) *Carting of Felled Material* : As. -/8/- to As. -/13/- per md.
- (vi) *Collection of Gum* : As. -/4/- to As. -/8/- per seer.
- (vii) *Collection of Temru Leaves* : One anna for 6 *gaddis* (packets) each containing 100 leaves.
- (viii) *Collection of Honey and Wax* : As. -/4/- to As. -/8/- per seer.
- (ix) *Collection of Leaves* : 6 pies per seer.
- (x) *Pealing of Barks, Ballies and Poles etc* : 6 pies to As. -/2/- per tea<sup>h</sup>.

*Daily Wages* : The day generally consists of 10 hours.

(i) *Carting* : Rs. 4/- to Rs. 5/- per day including the charges for cart, a pair of bullocks and the wage of the driver.

(ii) *Haulage and loading* : Re. 1 to Rs. 1-4-0 per day.

Even where labour is on seasonal contract the payment is generally piece-rated. The contract only ensures employment on the coupe.

The rates of wages differ in the different forest divisions. The cash wages paid to forest workers for various jobs in the different tribal belts are as given in

the table below :—

TABLE VIII  
DAILY CASH WAGES PAID TO FOREST LABOUR

No.	Forest Division	Wages per day		
		Men	Women	Children
<i>Bhil belt</i>				
1	Khargone	Re. 1/- to Rs. 1/8	Re. 1/- As. -/10/-	Boys
2	Dhar	As. -/12/- to Rs. 1/8	to Re. 1/-	As. -/8/- As. -/6/- Girls As. -/5/-
<i>Saharia belt</i>				
3	Guna			
4	Sheopur		Re. 1/-	As. -/12/- As. -/10/-
5	Shivpuri			
<i>Gond-Korku belt</i>				
6	Kannod	Re. 1/- to Rs. 1/8	Re. 1/-	As. -/12/-

The table shows that the range of wages is almost uniform. The supply of labour plays the chief role in determining the exact wage paid at a certain place and time. Another factor is the tradition of the rates paid at a particular place. Mobility of labour being highly restricted, labour supply can not be had from very distant areas. The local rate, therefore, has to be maintained by the contractor. Highest wages prevail in the Kannod forest division in the Gond-Korku belt. The forest of this division is of a high quality and therefore higher wages prevail here. The wages are lowest in the Dhar forest division in the Bhil belt which includes the district of Jhabua.

#### *Incomes in Various Jobs*

Average incomes in various jobs differ materially depending on the nature of job.

To get some idea of the scales of individual incomes in various jobs, we may study the source of the major forest works. We propose to make a brief study of *kattha* works, cartage hauling and loading, felling and cutting and the collection of tenure leaves.

For data regarding the average individual incomes in Cartage, hauling and felling operations we are indebted to the records maintained by the Sundrel Adivasi Multi-purpose Society in the Gond-Korku belt. This Society had taken a forest coupe on lease and maintained records of work and income of each worker for various wage periods.

### Kattha Works

*Kattha* season starts in November and lasts upto June. Generally the *Kattha* manufacture is entrusted to *Khairias* who are imported from Rajasthan. This is the practice in the Bundelkhand, Baghalkhand and Bhil and Gond-Korku belts. But in the Saharia belt Saharias are employed as *Khairias*. They are regarded quite efficient as *Khairias*, in these parts.

Whole Saharia families go for the *Kattha* work in the distant forest coupes held by the contractors on lease. The head *Khairias* are given the contract of preparing *Kattha* and the contractor pays for the final product. The unit of measurement is known as *Handi* which is an earthen pitcher. Seven families with the average of two workers per family can ordinarily prepare 20 *Handis* of *kattha* in a season. Normally one family can prepare 3 *Handis* in a season. Each *Handi* gives roughly 3 maunds of wet or 60 seers of dried *kattha* cakes. In weight each family would prepare 9 maunds of wet *kattha* in a season. The rate of *kattha* differs from year to year. If we take the average price of *kattha* as Rs. 100/- per maund in wet state, each family would get Rs. 900/- for the 3 *handis* of *kattha* manufactured by it.

The sum of Rs. 900/- represents the gross income of the family for the whole season. Payments for felling the *kattha* trees is made by the *khairia* from the gross income. Each family employs 2 wood cutters every month from January to June for felling the trees and for cutting them into small pieces. Each wood-cutter is paid Rs. 30/- per month. Thus, roughly each family has to spend Rs. 360/- for this work. Even if we do not consider

other deductions and illegal gratifications, the net income per family would not amount to more than Rs. 540/- for the whole season. That would mean roughly Rs. 90/- per month per family. On the assumption that there are two full workers in the family the income per head per month would be Rs. 45/-.

There are some malpractices associated with the *kattha* work which reduce the income of the *khairias* considerably. We may briefly refer to one such practice here. At the completion of the season the *khairias* collect the *kattha* spilled in the course of manufacture. This is weighed against rupee coins and the rupee equal in weight to this *kattha* are demanded by the Saharias from the contractor as *inam* (gift). Suppose that the contractor puts ten rupees in the scale against the spilled *kattha*. These ten rupees would go to the Saharia as gift. But in all weighments of the main *kattha* produce these coins would be used as an extra weight with the seer. Thus every seer would mean 1 seer + 10 tolas or 1 seer + 2 chhataks. The *kattha* weight would amount to 1 seer and 2 chhataks whereas the payment would be made for 1 seer only. Two chhataks of extra weight would mean a great deal in the total produce.

Another malpractise relates to the usage of considering  $7\frac{1}{2}$  seers of *kattha* as a *panseri* (5 seers). The weight received by the contractor is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  seers while the payment made is for 5 seers only.

These practises reduce the gross income of the Saharia. Since his working costs remain the same, his net income is much less than the average sum deduced above.

### *Haulage and Loading*

The usual rate of haulage and loading is Rs. 1/4/- per day. This includes bringing felled wood from hill tops to the carts below and loading them on carts. The duration work is 10 hours each day.

The Society paid Rs. 1/8/- instead of the usual rate of Rs. 1/4/-. Generally the Sunday was kept as a rest day. One week meant 6 working days only. But sometimes even Sunday were worked.

The table below gives the work done and wages earned by some workers in 4 weeks.

**TABLE IX**  
**4 WEEKLY EARNINGS OF LABOUR IN HAULAGE AND LOADING**  
**( Period : 26-3-56 to 21-4-56 )**

No.	Name of the worker	Tribe	No. of work days	No. of days worked	Total earning in period (in Rs.)
1	Nannu	Gond	25	21	31— 8—0
2	Bula	Gond	25	12	18— 0—0
3	Soina	Gond	25	8½	13— 4—0
4	Shivacharan	Gond	25	10½	15—12—0
5	Manphul	Korku	25	10½	15—12—0
6	Nahar Singh	Bhilala	25	10	15— 0—0
Average (for 4 weeks)				12.08	12— 3—6

It is seen that out of 25 working days in the period under consideration no tribal has worked all the days. The maximum presence is 21 out of 25. It goes as low as 8½. Every worker had the opportunity of earning Rs. 37/8/- in the 4 week period. But the average earnings are only Rs. 18/3/6. We find that despite relatively good wages offered by the Society the average monthly income remains less than Rs. 20/- in this job

### *Cartage*

Normal rate of cartage per day was only Rs. 4/-. But the Society paid Rs. 5/- per day. The wage includes the rent for cart and bullocks and wages for the driver.

The table below gives the earnings of some of the tribals doing the cartage work :

TABLE X  
WEEKLY EARNINGS IN CARTAGE  
(Period : 26-3-56 to 21-4-56)

No.	Name of the worker	Tribe	No. of work days	No. of days worked	Total earning in the period (Rs.)
1.	Nandan	Korku	26	19	95
2.	Channu	Gond	26	26	115
3.	Mohan	Gond	26	19	95
4.	Jam Singh	Bhilala	26	17	85
5.	Nandu	Bhilala	26	17	85
Average (4 weeks)				19	Rs. 95

It is seen that absenteeism is high here as well. Out of 26 work days the average presence works out to 19 only. Each cartman could earn Rs. 130/- in the 4-week period under consideration. But the average 4-weekly, or roughly the monthly wage amounts to Rs. 95/- only. Assuming the rent for bullocks to be Rs. 3/- per day and the cart Re. 1/- per day the wages of the driver amount to Rs. 19/- per month or a rupee per day (worked). Even if the cart and the bullocks were his own the tribal loses a good deal by large absenteeism.

### *Cutting and Felling*

Cutting and felling operations are perhaps the most common unskilled forest work. The wages here depend on the quality and the quantity of work done. Thus the wages are piece rated. The payments for some important types of work are given below :

#### *Cutting :*

*Sarla* : About 18" to 24" thick log used as beam in roofs. The payment is As. -/6/- per *sarla*.

*Barli* : About 12" to 14" thick log. Payment is As. -/3/- per piece.

*Tarli* : About 8" to 10" thick log. As. -/2/- per piece.

*Khamba* : Pieces of wood about 5 ft. long. As. -/2/- per piece.

*Jupya* : Thin pieces 4 to 5 ft. in length. As. -/1/- per piece.

*Gole* : About 30" to 40" thick piece. As. -/4/- per piece.

*Charpat* : Hollow piece 30" to 40" thick. As. -/4/- per piece.

*Dingar* : Small plants 3 — 4 ft. in length. As. -/2/- per piece.

*Khanchi* : Fixing wood for coal burning—Rs. 1/8/- per *khanchi*.

According to their efficiency each worker selects the type of wood he wants to cut. Generally the worker selects some light work like *jupya* and *dingar* together with *sarla*. The table below gives the average earnings of some tribal workers in 2 week period :

TABLE XI  
2 WEEKLY EARNINGS IN VARIOUS CUTTING AND  
FELLING OPERATIONS

No.	Name of worker	Tribe	Wages		Total earning of a fortnight
			Wage period I (6-1-56 to 13-1-56)	Wage period II	
1.	Chain Singh	Korku	18- 5-0	26- 3-0	44- 8-0
2.	Rupa Nanu	Korku	31- 8-0	29- 3-0	60-11-0
3.	Saitan Singh	Korku	4- 6-0	11- 5-0	15-11-0
4.	Pannachander	Gond	2-13-0	8-14-0	11-11-0
5.	Dhannuchantru	Gond	19- 8-0	11- 4-0	30-12-0
6.	Bud Daryar	Gond	6- 8-0	5- 1-0	11- 9-0
Average earning for 2 weeks					Rs. 29- 2-0

The weekly earnings show sharp variations. In one case they went as low as Rs. 2-13-0 and in one case went as high as Rs. 31-8-0. One worker earned as much as Rs. 60-11-0 in a fortnight while 2 workers earned roughly Rs. 12/- in the same period. This gives us an average fortnightly earning of Rs. 29-2-0. On a monthly basis it should roughly amount to Rs. 58-4-0.

Thus, we see that where the work is piece-rated the average incomes are higher. More incentive to work in piece wage pulls the incomes up.

By far the greatest factor responsible for low incomes is the absenteeism among the tribals. Work opportunities, in most of the areas, are also not adequate to absorb all the floating tribal labour on contract work.

### *Absenteeism*

Tribal forest labour is characterised by a great degree of absenteeism. Generally tribal labour comes to work on the forest coupes from long distances. Various causes draw them away from work for considerable periods. Nearer the home of the tribal, the greater is the absenteeism. If the homes are so far away that going once would cost a great deal of time and money, the absenteeism is checked to a certain extent. Of course, if the home is within a radius of 5 to 6 miles the absenteeism would be much less than would be the case when they are not near enough to live at their homes but are within a quick visiting range.

Following are the main causes of absenteeism :

1. Agricultural work at his farm,
2. Domestic needs,
3. Social and religious functions,
4. Liquor.

In those tribes which own land, as among Bhils and Bhilalas, there is always some agricultural work to attend to every now and then. The tribal labourer absents himself from work to go home in order to attend to such needs. In tribes which are generally landless the absenteeism due to this cause is lower.

Another cause is the domestic call. Sometimes the house needs repairs or somebody is sick. Tribal worker being highly attached to his family, such a news would be reason enough for his absence from work.

Marriages, death feasts and other social functions are another strong force causing absenteeism. Social customs and conventions in tribal communities are so strong that no sacrifice is considered too big to enable a tribal to meet

these requirements. Religious functions back home are equally irresistible for the tribal people. They cannot be missed at any cost.

And lastly we have the scourge of liquor. Every adult tribal drinks, unless some taboo has come to be attached to it. But in cases where drinking has become a habit and it is indulged in excessively, it results in strong hangovers. This again leads to absenteesim.

### *The Role of Contractors*

In our description of the mal-practices connected with *kattha* manufacture we have seen that the average contractor tries to cheat the tribal forest labour as much as possible. These mal-practises go with every work they get done on the piece wage.

But by far the greatest exploitation of the tribal wage-earner is through the retail shops run by the contractors and the advances given by them.

The labour is generally contracted through his *mumin* or agent. This agent generally contacts the *mukhia* (leader) of a group of tribals living near about. Through the *Mukhia* loans are advanced to the intending workers. The maximum amount of loan is Rs. 50/- which is made to the *mukhia*. Other members of his team get advances ranging from Rs. 10/- to Rs. 25/-. These advances force workers to work at even lower wages. Sometimes interest is also charged on these loans.

The forest coupes are generally far removed from the villages and towns. These are no provision for shops in the neighbourhood. The contractor runs his own shop where he sells goods at high prices. The worker can get anything he needs on credit. At the end of the season the accounts are presented and after deducting for the various purchases, etc., the tribal worker is paid the balance. Rarely does the tribal find the balance in his favour. If indebted, this serves as loan for the next year. This continues year after year. The tribal finds himself no better despite all his labours.

Another evil attached with forest contracts is the liquor shop located near coupes. Generally the forest contractor

either has direct interest in these shops or has some understanding with the liquor contractor. The tribal labour is encouraged to frequent these shops where he runs into big debts. The liquor shops are mobbed on weekly pay days and a good deal of the earnings of the tribal go to the liquor shop. These liquor contractors engage Sikh servants who are most cruel in realizing their dues from the tribals.

Thus the system of contracts and the acute absenteeism of the tribals creates a picture of very low incomes for the forest labour. Due to various mal-practices the average income in forest labour is much less than in the agriculture.

### MINING LABOUR

Mining labour forms quite a considerable section of the floating tribal labour. After agriculture and forest the largest volume of employment is offered by mining industries of various types. They include from the most advanced and organised manganese works to the most elementary and unorganised metal breaking and earth cutting operations. Manganese industry in the Bhil belt being the only organised, and industrially important mineral undertaking, it is being dealt with here.

#### *Manganese Mines*

These mines are situated near Meghnagar on the Ratlam Baroda section of the Western Railway. These mines in 1952-53 yielded 21,399 tons of manganese valued at Rs. 17½ lakhs. The mines are leased to non-tribals.

#### *The Method of Exploitation*

The mineral is exploited by contractors (leesees) on royalty basis. The royalty is fixed by the Department of Industries under the Mineral Concession Rules 1949. The mineral is sent to Bombay from where it is exported to foreign countries. The mining lease normally continues from 15 to 20 years. The leases are of two types. One is annual deed rent for minimum 2 thousand tons of the mineral. The other is Royalty over production. Besides these two types of leases there is the third—the prospecting

lease. Under this lease the lessee can use up to 30 tons of mineral for experimental and non-commercial purposes. Over and above this amount royalty is charged at the scheduled rates.

### *Labour*

Although located in the predominantly tribal area the labour employed on the mines is of a mixed nature—consisting of the tribals as well as the non-tribals. The tribal (Bhils and Bhilala) labour is of a local nature. It is drawn from a radius of 3 to 5 miles, mainly from the agricultural class. The Bhil and the Bhilala labourer does not like to stay on the site. This is not confined to the landholders. Even those who do not hold land behave in the same way. Every evening the tribal worker goes back to his homestead and returns to work every morning. It is found impossible to persuade the tribal labour to live near the mine. This attachment to the home reduces considerably the geographical mobility of the tribal people. If the tribal does not find employment near his hamlet he would rather go hungry than consent to stay from his home and clan.

The tribal labour in these mines forms nearly 25% of the total labour force. Rest is recruited from non-locals from Rajasthan. This proportion is not fixed and rigid. It depends largely on agricultural conditions. If the season has been good, smaller number would turn up for work. In bad years when rains are scanty and crops bad, the tribal labour force increases considerably.

### *Classification of Labour*

The mining labour employed in various occupations such as :

1. Earth cutting,
2. Bed-ore mining,
3. Drilling,
4. Jigging,
5. Ore cleaning and washing,
6. Transport,

7. Railing and loading,
8. Miscellaneous.

The tribal labour is employed on non-skilled jobs like earth cutting, bed-ore mining, jigging, etc. Skilled jobs like drilling are not entrusted to them. The skilled jobs are manned by the *Marwada* labour from Rajasthan. Most of the tribal labour is found working on bed-ore mining.

### *Recruitment*

The tribal labour is recruited through the system of advances. An agent (*munim* or *mukadam*) of the contractor goes to the neighbouring tribal villages from where the labour has generally been drawn in the previous years. He contracts the village patel and other elders whom he knows or who have been on his working list in the previous seasons. He persuades him to accept cash advances ranging from Rs. 10/- to Rs. 100/-. This he uses for paying land revenue or other social requirements. In return he does not ask for a stamped receipt or a pronote. The acceptance of advance morally binds the tribal labourer to present himself on the mine when the season starts. As a rule no interest is charged on the advance. And, as a matter of course, the sum advanced is conscientiously returned to the contractor in easy instalments.

### *Methods of Employment*

The labour is employed on contract basis and the work is generally piece-rated.

### *Excavation*

For excavation the work unit is termed as a 'Form'. This is a volume unit, measuring 5ft x 5ft x 1ft. In Hindi it is termed as '*Peti*'. The rates of payment are as follows :

1. 'A' Grade of Manganese (finished) Rs. 25—30 per Form.
2. 'B' Grade of Manganese (finished) Rs. 15—20 per Form.
3. 'C' Grade of Manganese (finished) Rs. 10—15 per Form.

Mineral below grade 'C' is not accepted.

Measurement of excavation is made fortnightly. Excavation is carried on in the gangs of five to six.

### *Average Earning*

A gang of 4 would ordinarily earn Rs. 75/- to Rs. 80/- in a fortnight. This period includes two days off—Monday being the off day. Thus this income is a result of 12 days' work. On this basis the average earning would amount to approximately Rs. 20/- per head per fortnight. On a monthly basis it would add up to Rs. 40/- per head. Since the workers are piece rated no distinction is made between men, women and children.

### *Other Types of Work*

The only other type of work where the work is piece rated is earth cutting. The rate of payment is As. -/12/- per form which includes not only earth cutting but also dumping it at a distance. The volume of this work is very small as it is in the initial stages only that earth cutting is required. Once the pit is made this operation ceases. For jigging and cleaning etc. the rate varies from As. -/8/- per day in case of women to As. -/14/- per day in case of men. The work is considered very light and comfortable and therefore generally women are employed on these works.

### *Absenteeism*

A great deal of absenteeism is found among the tribal labour. This is generally of a seasonal nature. It is due to their primary interest in agriculture. Sometimes death, marriage and birth also call them home. But mostly it is the call of the land. If there is rain they will hurry home and stay away from the mines for days together. When the land or the home does not need them, they return for work.

### *Efficiency*

In the absence of objective tests it is difficult to comment on the efficiency of the tribal labour. But the opinion

of the observers, which includes a man of the calibre of Shri S. K. Roy, Mining Engineer of the Kajli Dongri mines, (who was formerly the Director, Department of Mines and Quarries of the Madhya Bharat Government). Mr. Roy's observation is that the tribal labour is 10 to 20 per cent less efficient than its Marwada opposite number. Another notable feature relates to the peculiar psychology of the tribal labour. As soon as he feels that he has earned enough for the day's bread, he ceases work. He cannot be induced to work more. This indolence coupled with his inefficiency leads to much lower monthly income than what the *Marwada* is able to secure.

### *Concessions and Facilities etc.*

Since the tribal labour does not stay at the site of the mine it is not entitled to any concessions and facilities etc. The only concession they enjoy is the interest free loan given by way of recruitment advance.

### *Other Mines, Quarries*

The other minerals that provide work to the tribals are chiefly road metal breaking, earth cutting for dressing the roads or providing foundation for metalled roads. These occupations are of a casual nature. When the State Public Works Department undertakes road construction in an area, the tribals from the neighbouring villages find work for a few days. At the most this type of occupation provides employment for a month in a year. The number of people employed is very limited as the competition is very great from scheduled castes and other backward classes. As a supplementary source of livelihood these occupations are not dependable. Nor does this make any notable contribution to the tribal coffers. Whatever be the unit of measurement and hours of work the wages do not work out to more than a rupee per day for men and As. -/12/- for women. The work is hard and taxing.

### *Road Metal*

Breaking of road metal is piece rated. The unit of measurement is generally the '*phadi*'. This unit measures

5ft x 5ft x 1ft. The rate of payment is Rs. 8/- per *phadi*. This includes, besides metal breaking, the transporting of metals from distant quarries and delivering them at the road site. One *phadi* of road metal can be completed by a single man in nearly eight days. A woman would take nearly 12 days to do the job.

### *Earth Digging*

Earth digging is measured by the unit known as '*khanti*'. It measures 10ft x 10ft x 1ft. The rates of payment are as follows :

1. Hard surface Rs. 2—4—0 to Rs. 2—8—0 per *khanti*.
2. Black soil Rs. 2—0—0 per *khanti*.

The tribal labour completes a '*khanti*' in two days. Here too non-tribal labour, particularly *Marwada* labour in the Ratlam district was found to be much more efficient.

## CHAPTER "VIII

### COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

Cottage industries occupy a very important place in the economy of a predominantly agricultural and rural country like India. In view of the large size of our population and staggering pressure on land, subsidiary and alternate sources of gainful employment are vital for the economy of the country. Since the employment offered by industries and trade and commerce is highly insufficient, it is the cottage industries that act as the saviours.

#### *Place in Tribal Economy*

What holds good about the country in general is even more applicable to the tribal communities of Madhya Bharat. The tribal pattern of life shows a still greater reliance on agriculture and almost cent percent concentration in the rural areas. We have had occasion earlier to refer at some length to the rural character of the tribal population and to the occupational characteristics of the tribal economy in this part of the country. We have also seen that agriculture is not a 'game' of profit in the tribal areas. Agriculture is just a way of life because their freedom in forests has been rigorously restricted in the last few decades and there is no other way of keeping the flame of life alive. Income from agriculture has to be supplemented with forestry. And the forest itself is now in the hands of non-tribals and non-local contractors, and every little bit is licensed and prohibited. Thus, there is generally a wide gap between income and even the barest subsistence expenditure. In years of bad rainfall and poor crops, this gap becomes wide, occasionally bringing the wolves to the very doors of the tribal people. Famine stalks the tribal countryside. Health and vitality go low, and the debts go up. In years of good rainfall and satisfactory crops, relatively, the gap narrows down, but a great part of the surplus goes to the money-lender to pay back part of his

debts and interest thereon. The destitution continues and the deficit persists.

The one-crop-khariff economy is another characteristic worth note. In the tribal areas the agricultural season sets in by the end of May or beginning of June in the southern parts and the crop is harvested by September or October. In the northern parts the season starts somewhere in late June or early July and closes by late September or early October. Broadly the agricultural activity lasts mainly 4 to 5 months. Agriculture in these regions does not offer adequate or continuous employment. What happens in the next 7 or 8 months? Part of the time there is employment in the forest coupes or *kattha* and coal manufacture or independent exploitation of the *temru* leaves and other minor produce. Partly the problem is solved by migration to the Malwa plateau to harvest the wheat crop. The rest is again a gap—with no gainful employment and no reserves to fall back upon. For the tribal people in general at least 4 months preceding the onset of monsoon are days of great trials and tribulations. Black cloud of despondency descends on the tribal life. Visits to the money-lender become more frequent. Search for wild fruits and roots intensifies. Poorer of the poor start cutting rations and skipping meals. The natural vitality and gaiety of the tribal people goes in hibernation. The communal '*dhol*' does not echo any more in the hills and the valleys of the tribal land. Nor do the strong strains of powerful folk-tunes rend the air now. There is occasional break in this tribal somnolence if there is a marriage in the community near about. Large masses of tribal folks collect, the country liquor goes round and there is fire once again in the sleeping eyes. The *dhol* starts beating, the supple bodies start moving restlessly and break into vigorous dance and song which continue through the night to the very dawn. The day is over. Once again there is quiet and inactivity and indolence and stupor.

The solution of forced unemployment and resultant despondency largely lies in the cottage industries. They

can fill the gap between low incomes and the minimum family requirements, and provide work round the year.

### *The Present Position*

Madhya Bharat is not very backward in cottage industries. Textiles, leather, clay, wood, metal, oil-pressing and basket-making are some of the more important cottage industries of the State. It is estimated that these cottage industries provide sustenance to nearly 2 percent of the total population of the State.

The tribal areas, generally, show a much lower proportion of population dependent on cottage industries. The table below shows the position as in 1954-55.

TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION DEPENDENT ON  
COTTAGE INDUSTRIES IN TRIBAL BELTS (1954-55)

No.	Tehsil and Tribal Belt	Percentage of population dependent on cottage industries.
<i>Bhil Belt</i>		
1.	Jhabua	1.0
2.	Thandla	0.6
3.	Bhikangaon	1.32
4.	Sailana	0.8
5.	Kukshi	0.77
<i>Saharia Belt</i>		
6.	Pohri	1.5
7.	Pichor	6.0
8.	Guna	2.0
<i>Gond Korku Belt</i>		
9.	Kannod	1.5
10.	Khategaon	2.0

The table indicates that in the Bhil belt, where the tribal population is highly concentrated, the cottage industries are very undeveloped. Thandla in Jhabua district shows only 0.6 percent of total population depend-

ent on cottage industries. Bhikangaon (Nimar) and Jhabua show slightly higher proportion. But all of them are much below the State average.

In the Saharia and Gond-Korku belt, where the tribal population is very scattered, a higher percentage of population is dependent on cottage industries. Pichore (District Shivpuri) for instance, shows an average three times the State average.

It would be erroneous to assume that these figures indicate the tribal dependence on cottage industries. Cottage industries, even now, continue to be caste-ridden. All the cottage industries mentioned above are monopolised by definite castes. Most of these industries are in the charge of the Harijans and other Hindu castes considered low in the social hierarchy. The bamboo, for instance, is worked by basod, khajur mat weaving by bagris, oil pressing by telis, leather by chamars and balais, earthen pots by kumhars, weaving by julahas and bunkars, iron and steel by luhars, goldsmithy by sunars and sonis, carpentry by sutars etc. The Hindu social structure has crystalized this division of labour so firmly that its violation by any individual is unthinkable.<sup>2</sup> That pattern has not undergone any change in tribal communities living in close contact with the Hindus. The percentages mentioned above only show that in areas of tribal concentration non-tribals, particularly Harijans are fewer and therefore cottage industries are less developed.

### *Tribal Traditions*

There are no traditions of handicrafts and cottage industries among the tribal people. In the commercial sense there is hardly any industry or handicraft associated with the tribal communities. Even for ordinary domestic needs like cloth, earthen pots and pans, oil, footwear, axes, ploughshares, seeds drills and even arrows they depend on non-tribal artisans. This is not confined to the tribal habitations close to the non-tribal areas only. Even in the isolated tribal areas the same dependence on others is evident. There is some effort at rope making and basket

making, but it is highly restricted and has no business aspect. Even if the tribal people know certain crafts they do not use them for providing work at off-season. They do not yield him any income. Despite seasonal unemployment and appalling poverty the tribal does not even think of using such knowledge of crafts he possesses for supplementing his meagre income.

Traditionally the tribes of Madhya Bharat were regarded till recently as hunters and food gathereres. Bhilas were probably the first to be recognised as agriculturists some fifty years back. Bhils till recently were considered as wild and the Saharias and Korkus were pre-eminently forestors and hunters. This absence of traditions of handicrafts in the tribes of central India is a singular phenomenon. It appears more so when it is remembered that primitive tribes all over the world are adept in various types of handicrafts. Even in India there are tribes in the north and north-east which are famous for their skill of hand. The Nagas, for instance, are expert weavers and makers of colourful patterns. What, then, is the reason for the lack of this skill in central India ? The reason, most probably, is to be found in the history of this part of the country. It has been observed during the course of our short historical account of the tribes that all the major tribes of central India have originally been the rulers in the parts that they inhabit today. Bhils in the south and Saharias in the north were once independent rulers. The Gond in the Gondwana was a force to contend with. These erstwhile rulers for the past several centuries have been living in close proximity with the Hindus. The caste ridden Hindus assigned specific occupations to various castes and thus had a rough and ready occupational division of labour. All the occupations were taken care of and passed on from one generation to another. Now, the Bhils and the Saharias that lived with them, or near them, had their needs supplied by the Hindu artisans. They were never allowed to, nor did they ever feel the urge, to take to these handicrafts. On the one hand the Hindu artisans supplied all the needs pertaining to various crafts. On the

other hand these crafts needed long training, skill and purely sedentary habits. As lovers of the forest and adepts in hunting and fishing, the tribals concentrated their attention to these primary occupations that gave them their food. As a wilder and more primitive race they did not have very many secondary needs. Their requirements of cloth are very scanty even today, and they have taken to spices and other non-essentials only in recent years.

In the fields that they reserved for themselves, their hands work quite skillfully. The Bhils, for instance, make excellent fishing nets and wicker cages to trap small fish. Bhilalas make excellent bamboo mats with beautiful designs, to act as screens for their small huts. Ordinary agricultural accessories like ropes and storage bins they make by their own hands. Thus, inherently, there is nothing to suggest muscular or mental deficiency *vis-a-vis* the handicrafts.

Their contact with Hindus going back thousands of years, and the caste character of occupation in Hindu society explains the lack of tribal development in the field of handicrafts. There must have been individuals from these tribes who took to various handicrafts and were finally absorbed in the caste their handicrafts belonged to. Serological and other tests show that a good deal of the so called low castes of Hindus must have been recruited from the tribal ranks. Thus those tribals who practised the accepted arts were lost to the tribal society and the tribal society continued to depend on the Hindus artisans, many of whom were their nearest cousins. Conversions from tribal ranks to the exterior castes of Hindus must have been considerable, caused by economic, social and other causes. Thus if a tribal was competent in a craft his advantage lay in joining the accepted caste. He deserted the tribal ranks and got absorbed in some old caste or formed a new one of his own.

The present pattern of tribal economy bears the strong imprint of these historical conditions. So long as they had the freedom of the forests this lack of diversification was no handicap. Game was plenty, wild fruits were

abundant and shifting cultivation was unhesitatingly resorted to. Existence did not call for many artifacts and implements. There was plenty of food all round the year without the botheration of storage. But with the march of civilization and increase in the population forests were cut down to clear land for agriculture and habitation. The traditional ways of tribal life were no more possible. No shifting cultivation now and no unrestricted killing of the game. The tribal forester was gradually converted into settled agriculturist. And that begins the tale of his present woes and poses a challenge to the inertia of traditions. He must take to new occupations if he wishes to survive. Casteism and poverty make the transition still more difficult. The former resisting all encroachment from outside and the latter making the effort less effective. The economic and social climate is, thus, highly unsuitable to the vital changeover. Cooperative organization on one hand and the translation of the fundamental concepts of the Republican constitution into practice on the other hand are essential to break this *impasse*. For the tribals the present is a period of transition. And on the successful transition to other occupations largely depends their future.

### *Recent Efforts*

In the last eight years some efforts have been made to introduce some new cottage industries in the tribal economy and to organise the old ones into efficient units. These industries are :—

- (a) Weaving
- (b) Palm gur making
- (c) Sericulture
- (d) Bee-keeping
- (e) Carpentry
- (f) Poultry
- (g) Blacksmithy.

The progress made in this direction is briefly discussed below to enable us to judge the possibilities of the various industries in tribal homes.

**Weaving**—With a view to train the tribal people in the art of weaving carpets and cloth, the Madhya Bharat State has been running several centres. A study of two of these centres located at Jobat (district Jhabua) and Bag (district Dhar) in the Bhil belt gives a fair indication of the possibilities and the problems of weaving as a cottage industry among the Bhils and the Bhilalas.

At the Jobat *dari* weaving centre young Bhil and Bhilala boys of round about ten years in age were admitted for a training course lasting one year on a monthly stipend of Rupees twenty. These tribal boys had their homes within three mile radius of the Jobat town. At the time of the commencement of the kharif more than half the boys left the centre for their homes, and came back after Diwali only, when the agricultural operations were over. Since its inception in 1950, 120 students had been trained at this centre by May 1955. But it was discovered that not one of these 120 had taken to this cottage industry, despite the fact that the Industries Department supplies them the loom free of cost.

This indifference to the craft they learn for a year, shows that the students are tempted by the stipend and not by the craft. This conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that some ~~take~~ back when prices had gone up and the general rate of wages in the neighbouring areas had risen, the students had refused to stay in the training centre on a stipend of Rs. 15/- that was in vogue at the time. The stipend then had to be raised to Rs. 20/- per month to induce the tribal boys to stick to the centre.

But in the matter of intelligence and aptitude the tribal boys were found to be as efficient as boys of other castes, and had qualified within the stipulated time.

At the Bag weaving centre, the same tale was repeated. Since 1949 this centre had been training tribals in the art of weaving cloth. The duration of the course was one year. 200 tribals, mostly Bhils, have been trained at this centre since 1949. After the completion of their training at least 20 tribals homes were fitted with fly shuttle looms to enable them to manufacture cloth. The Industries

Department undertook to purchase all the cloth they made. But even this did not work. The average monthly production varied roughly from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 6/- only. Ultimately the tribals tired of the business and gave it up altogether. There are only one or two persons trained at this centre who still continue this work independently.

The experience gained at this centre confirms that but for the stipend paid to the tribals (which is Rs. 20/- p.m.), they would not enroll for the training. If this stipend does not compare favourably with the rates of wages prevalent in the area, the number of trainees would be reduced considerably.

*Palm Gur*—Palm trees are found quite abundantly in the tribal areas. It was a bright idea to tap the palms for the manufacture of *gur* (Jaggery). For this purpose 5 training centres were opened in the Bhil belt. The duration of the training course was 4 months. During the course of training the trainees were paid a stipend of Rs. 25/- p.m. After the completion of the training they were paid a subsidy of Rs. 100/- per trainee to enable them to purchase necessary equipment and follow the industry independently.

Between 1950-51 and 1953-54, 263 tribals had been trained at these centres. But not more than 3 or 4 persons have taken to the industry. It has created a certain amount of consciousness of the potentials of the palm tree. But unless there is good demand for the palm *gur* in the areas and it can yield the tribal enough regular income, the industry would not amount to much in the tribal economy.

*Sericulture*—Sericulture is another cottage industry introduced in the tribal areas recently. In Sardarpur (district Dhar) a training centre was opened some years back to popularize it in the Bhils and the Bhilalas. But there does not appear to be any instance where the tribal people have taken to it as a business.

*Bee-keeping*—As foresters, the tribal people are quite familiar with the bees in their natural habitat. They are adepts in collecting the whole honeycombs from the most dangerous places. But they have never been bee-keepers. Rather than keep the bees in artificial combs the tribal

finds it more convenient to collect them from forest and earn an extra rupee or two. The State Government has made some efforts in training the tribals in this art. But what success they have achieved, is too early to say, as so far only one centre has been opened and no details are available regarding its functioning.

*Poultry*—This is one cottage industry that really has roots in the tribal economy. Every Bhil and Bhilala household keeps a large number of hens and cocks. These are meant for eggs, meat, religious sacrifices and for the entertainment of the children. The tribal loves his birds and would never allow his home to be without them.

The breeds are local, which are very small in size and have a poor laying capacity. The State Government considered it necessary to improve the local breeds by introducing heavier and better laying breeds in the tribal areas. Rhode Island Reds and White Laghorns have been kept in large numbers in 5 Poultry Farms opened in the tribal areas. The tribal people are given the concession of bringing *desi* (local) eggs and get improved eggs in return for hatching purposes. Besides the supply of improved eggs for improving the breed of the poultry, educational and popularisational work is also being done by these centres.

Despite these efforts we find no material or noticeable improvement either in the breed of the birds or in the organisation of poultry keeping as an organised industry.

In the same way all efforts of the State Government to introduce carpentry, blacksmithy, basket making, bamboo furniture works etc. have not advanced higher than the training stage.

#### CAUSES

It is quite pertinent to reason why these industries have evoked no warm response from the tribal people. On the one hand they show normal talent in learning these cottage crafts. And on the other no sooner they complete the training, the initial interest is no longer in evidence. This lack of effective use of the craft learnt cannot be ascribed to their intellect. Nor is it indolence. The chief causes responsible for this apparent indifference are following :—

1. *Selection of the Craft*—Sometimes we try to introduce such crafts which have no roots in tribal social order. Take the art of weaving for instance. The tribal people of the State have not the remotest association with this difficult fine art. An art that is in some way connected with their existing technical skill would have a better chance of acceptance. Take for instance the carpentry. Now, being a forester the tribal knows the use of axe. In his own crude way even the most wild tribal knows how to fashion various simple articles out of wood. The raw-material and the elementary tool—both he knows well. As such carpentry does not mean basically a new craft to him. It is only a matter of improvement of the elementary practice he is familiar with. In the same way poultry keeping is familiar to the tribal people. He can easily take to it. In comparison to this, sericulture would be a difficult art to learn.

This aspect is generally not borne in mind when a new craft is introduced.

2. *Follow-up*—Even when suitable craft is selected and a good training is imparted to the tribal, the follow up is not satisfactory. A new craft needs careful nursing until it is firmly rooted in the economic pattern of the tribe concerned. This is not done in most of the cases. The difficulties of the tribals in the art concerned are not anticipated. Nor is there any scheme to help him solve these difficulties. Scores of technical problem arise that try the patience of the novice. If he does not get timely guidance his interest flags down, and ultimately he leaves the new craft. A good follow-up scheme would put heart into the struggling tribal and set him on the right path firmly and solidly. The neglect of this aspect again contributes to lack of development of cottage industries among tribals.

3. *Finance*—Adequate finance is essential for introducing a new cottage industry. Raw materials and tools and equipment require investment. The size of the investment depends on the nature of the industry. Besides raw materials and tools, finance is required for subsistence purposes as well. Between the production and sale of the

produce there is a time-lag. This time-lag requires finance that is equally indispensable. There should be some machinery to meet this requirement. If it is left to the *sahukar*, the new industry would mean a greater exploitation of the tribal artisan. Unfortunately, this aspect of the problem is sadly neglected.

Timeliness is another important aspect of the financial problem. Where the State grants subsidy it is marked by long delays and frequent running about. These delays cause a lot of botheration and lead to suffering and discouragement. In case of ignorant tribals red-tapism and bureaucracy leads to corrupt practices. The administrative inefficiency contributes considerably to the failure of many good projects in the backward areas.

4. *Competition from hereditary castes*—Introduction of a new craft sometimes leads to competition from settled hereditary castes following the same occupation. A *luhar* for instance does not look kindly to the initiation of his old client in his hereditary trade. His vested interest in the occupation leads him to oppose and act against the success of the new entrant. There is sabotage on every plane—social, economic and even physical. While to a certain extent this may be inevitable in a redistribution of works and trades, care should be taken in introducing a new craft that it should not cause much conflict.

5. *Supply of raw-material and tools*—The supply of raw materials to cottage industries is also of great importance. In the less accessible tribal areas where villages are not compact and shops are few, this problem assumes a greater significance. Unless regular supplies of good quality of raw material is available to the tribal at fair price at a place near his habitation, he is faced with long wastages of time. This also the Government has failed to provide. The village *hats* would be the suitable place where mobile vans may be placed to supply raw materials to the tribals.

Necessary tools and equipment pose an equally urgent problem. Their solution may be undertaken together with that of the raw materials.

**6. Marketing**—Last but not the least is the question of marketing. As a matter of fact it is the rock against which the ship of cottage industries founders. This again, is an aspect that is neglected altogether. Tribal cottage industries—old and new alike—suffer from want of proper marketing facilities. Commission agents purchase eggs from the tribal hamlets as cheap as 3 pies per egg which are sold in the town market ranging anywhere from As. 2 to As. 2/6 per egg. This state does not provide any incentive to the tribal to bother about better breeds of poultry unless he can sell all his produce with a fair margin of profit.

### *Prospects*

We have discussed some of the important short-comings in the field of cottage industries that hinder its progress. If these short-comings are removed there is wide scope of cottage industries in the tribal rural economy.

The Second Five Year Plan of Madhya Bharat proposes to set up a “direction and marketing organisation” to carry out coordination between training centres and the industries. If that is done there would be marked progress in the field.

Proper survey of the possibilities of cottage industries in various tehsils would be required to know the position of raw materials and the demand and supply of various cottage industries products. In the light of these surveys and the traditions and aptitudes of the tribal people of the region concerned, proper industries should be selected for introduction. The crafts concerned should be such that they create the least possible conflict with the existing producers. A broad caste survey would, probably, be also required to determine the areas conflict. Such areas of conflict would have to be avoided in the present circumstances of tribal backwardness.

The craft selected should generally be such that it may fit in as a subsidiary industry with agriculture. Initially a cottage industry should not be made the main industry. This would mean less risk for the tribal concerned, as the

failure of cottage industries would not lead to starvation. Agriculture would act as the second line of defence. Sole dependence on cottage industry may be risked where people are landless, as in Saharia belt, and have nothing else to do.

So far Madhya Bharat has neglected the sex aspect of cottage industries. Women have so far been left out in all its schemes of introduction of new cottage industries. Women offer a greater scope in this matter than do the men. The administrative attitude in this connection requires revision. Trust the ladies to further the cause of handicrafts and cottage industries.

Thus we find that various social and financial factors hinder the adoption of suitable cottage industries in the tribal areas. Even dire necessity has not been able to force the acceptance of cottage industries in the tribal economy. The raw materials are there, the demand is there, the necessary talent is there. What is absent is finance and organisation. Cooperation seems to be the only answer to the manifold problems coming in way of the successful organisation of cottage industries.

## CHAPTER IX

### MARKETS AND MARKETING

As we have seen earlier, the tribal agriculture is characteristically an agriculture aiming at the satisfaction of the elementary needs of the tribal people. The whole object of a tribal cultivator is to grow enough grains to feed the family. Agriculture is not a business meant to earn profits. It is primarily a way of life—a very primitive and hazardous type of existence where the past is unpleasant, the present uncertain and the future unthinkable. The subsistence type of farming is the distinguishing feature of tribal agriculture. Small and uneconomic holdings preponderate. Rocky and steep land has a very shallow cultivable soil mantle. Rain is low and uneven, and the soil has little capacity to hold it. Germination percentage of seeds is very low and the average yields deplorably poor. Rich and deep soil, where commercial crops like groundnuts, cotton, wheat, linseed and tilli etc. may be grown, is a rarity in a tribal holding.

The result is that even in normal years the average tribal holding does not yield sufficient grains to feed the large household, and enough fodder to feed the even larger livestock. Tribal farming, as a matter of fact, is not sufficient for the barest existence even. But for the abounding forests, the tribal would starve despite his labours with the land. The yield of the land is consumed while he is only less than half way through the year. For a large part of the year, the tribal farmer derives his livelihood from sources other than his land. Generally the tribal cultivator is not left with enough grains for sowing the next kharif. He is driven to the *sahukar* to borrow seeds at exorbitant rates.

Under these conditions or subsistence farming marketing of agricultural produce is a very minor problem. It is mainly for his requirement of cloth, tobacco, salt, sweet oil, kerosene, farm implements and occasionally some

ornaments and liquor that the tribal farmer needs some sort of a market where he may sell his surplus produce and exchange it for the articles he needs. Naturally, in an economic organisation of this type, the volume of marketing is always very small.

Absence of statistical information regarding the various aspects of tribal economies makes it impossible to have a quantitative idea of the marketable surplus in tribal agriculture. All efforts of the author to collect such data during the course of his investigations proved fruitless. The tribal people are not used to quantitative thinking. It is impossible to know from them the amount of produce raised by them or even the area of land under various crops in a particular year. We can attempt a general consideration of the subject, based largely on observations, and the evidence of the Government officials and public workers who have lived and worked in these regions.

### *Marketable Surplus*

The general pattern is that all the commercial and the cash crops, when and if grown, are sold in the market. Only a very small part of it is kept for the purposes of seed. All of cotton is sold. In case of groundnuts a small amount is sometimes kept for the domestic use. Linseed and other oilseeds are sold almost cent percent. Wheat is considered as a luxury in the tribal household, and is generally sold for hard cash. *Makka*, *jowar* and *tuar* are sold voluntarily only when they are over and above the family needs. They are however, to be disposed off if the *sahukar* is adamant on his instalment and forces him to part with these cereals so vital to him. If the average per capita consumption of cereals (including pulses) is estimated as 1-1/4 seers (or 5 paos) per day per adult and the average size of tribal household is taken as 6 or equal to 4 adults it would give us a daily consumption of 5 seers of cereals per household per day. The average monthly consumption per household would amount to 3 maunds and 30 seers. Allowing some margin for guests and social functions etc., this would come to roughly 4 maunds per house-

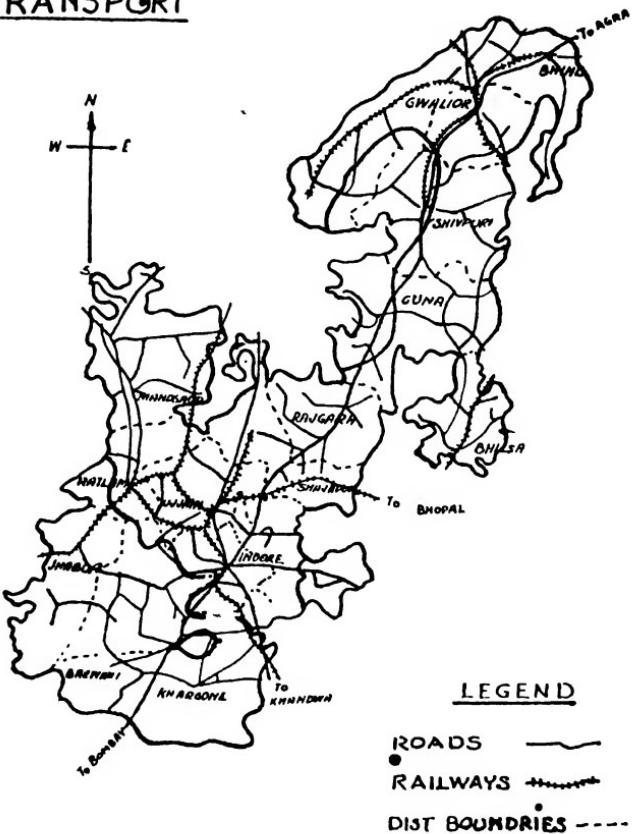
hold per month. Taking the prevalent holding as 10 acres and average yield of cereals (*makka* and *jowar*) as 3 maunds per acre, if all the grain is used at home it would last for not more than 7 months. In bad years, which are a rule, the produce would last even shorter. From this meagre produce he is willing to sell just enough to get him supplies of things like tobacco, salt, spices and cloth etc., which he does not produce. Assuming this expenditure to be Rs. 3 per month in cash or 10 seers of cereals in kind, this would roughly amount to 3 maunds of cereals per year. Thus, on this crude calculation which leaves aside many factors, out of a total annual produce of 30 maunds he is voluntarily willing to market only 3 maunds of cereals. This would give us roughly 10 per cent of total produce as 'voluntary marketable surplus'. In smaller holdings the marketable surplus would be even lower than this figure, but in cases of big holdings the surplus would be much higher. Even though the percentage deduced above cannot be considered as very accurate, it would suffice to show that the voluntary marketable surplus is very low in tribal economy.

It is apparent from the above discussion that in the tribal economy marketable surplus is exceedingly small. The overwhelmingly large part is consumed in the household or spent in paying the village carpenter, the potter and other artisans who supply goods and services to the cultivator during the year. The small fraction of the total produce, probably not more than 15 per cent, is marketed. This includes voluntary as well as involuntary marketable portion. Problems of marketing relate to this part of the produce only.

### *Means of Transport and Communications*

The topographical features of the various tribal areas have always prevented a swift transportation of the goods to the distant markets. As a matter of fact, until the dawn of the present century these areas were mostly a closed book. The mountainous and the forest areas abounded in the wild animals and the lawless tribals.

CENTRAL INDIA  
TRANSPORT



The rulers of the states who held sway over these wild tracts were not interested in the opening of these areas. Successive waves of famines in these areas in the later part of the last century and the beginning of the present one, led to a lot of hue and cry in the then British India. Various famine commissions enquired into the causes and the remedies of these periodic visitations throughout the country, and among other things, stressed the need of building new roads and railway lines to carry relief to distant and isolated areas. The princely India was also shaken from its slumbers and had to do something to fall in line with the rest of the country. The progress was forced upon them by external forces but they managed to do as little as possible. The roadless and inaccessible areas saw the extension of some old roads and the construction of a few new ones. But even for the open and fertile country how inadequate was this opening up would be obvious from a study of the map of transport and communications in Madhya Bharat as a whole. Prior to the beginning of the First Five Year Plan the total road mileage in the State amounted to 4,426 road miles. This meant that 1 mile of road length served 10.73 square miles. In terms of population one road mile served 1,852 persons. The completion of the First Plant meant a little change in the position. Five Years of planning added only 360 miles of roads in the whole State. At the end of the First Plan period the total road mileage in the State stood at 4,786 giving 1 mile of road for every 9.90 square miles. Now 1 mile of road served 1,700 persons.

In respect of railways the position is still worse. The total route mileage in the State amounts to 1,110 miles giving an average of 43 square miles per mile of rail-road. This position remain unchanged for the last many years as no new line has been constructed under the Plan.

### *Roads in Tribal Areas*

The figures of road mileage given above do not give a correct idea of the condition in the tribal areas. Most of the important roads pass through the Malwa Plateau which

was once a centre of opium cultivation and which even now continues to be a rich wheat, cotton and groundnut area. In the narrow strip of Narmada valley in the Nimar there is again a concentration of the roads. But in the mountainous areas in general and the Hill division in particular the roads are few and far between. The table below gives idea of the position of roads in the tribal areas :

TABLE I

## AREA, POPULATION AND ROAD MILEAGE IN THE TRIBAL AREAS

No. Tribal belt and tehsil	Area (in sqr. miles)	Total population	Metalled roads	Area per one mile of metalled road	Population per mile of metalled road
<i>Bhil belt</i>					
1 Thandla	403	63,518	23		
2 Jhabua	495	88,588	89		
3 Kukshi	664	1,13,682	75		
4 Bhikangaon	1,126	1,05,654	97		
Total	2,688	3,71,442	284	9.4	1,307
<i>Saharia belt</i>					
5 Pohri	617	68,770	27		
6 Pichor	612	64,587	48		
7 Guna	620	1,13,019	83		
Total	1,849	2,46,376	158	11.7	1,559
<i>Gond-Korku belt</i>					
8 Bagli	551	56,194	66		
9 Khategaon	413	42,874	30		
Total	964	99,068	96	10.0	1,032
Grand Total	5,501	7,16,886	538	10.2	1,332

The table shows that in the 9 tehsils sampled above there are 538 miles of roads for an area of 5,501 square miles and a total general population of 7,16,886. This gives us  
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an average of 1 road mile per 10.2 square miles of area. One road mile serves 1,332 persons.

In different tribal belts the position is slightly different. In the Bhil belt (in the tehsils selected) for 2,688 square miles there are 284 miles of road giving 1 mile of road for 9.4 square miles of area and a population of 1,307. The Saharia belt shows 158 miles of road for an area of 1,849 square miles and a population of 3,71,442. This gives an average of 11.7 square miles of area and 1,559 persons per one mile of road. The Gond-Korku belt has 96 miles of roads in the selected tehsils with 964 square miles of area and 99,068 of population. One mile of road here serves 10.0 square miles of area or 1,032 persons. These figures apparently show that the Bhil belt is better served as far as the area per mile of road is concerned. Perhaps it would be so had the Bhil belt been a compact area with regular villages. Fewer roads would have sufficed to connect the villages with markets. But the scattered nature of Bhil hamlets makes this mileage utterly inadequate. In respect of population served the Gond-Korku belt seems to be better placed. But from both considerations the Saharia belt appears to be most backward in this respect.

### *Railways in Tribal Areas*

So far as the railways are concerned the tribal areas show a still more deplorable state. In the Bhil belt the Western Railway (broad gauge) passes through parts of tehsil Sailana in Ratlam district and tehsil Petlawad in the Jhabua District. The length of railway mileage would amount to roughly 30 miles. Parts of district Nimar are touched by the metre gauge line of the Western Railway on the Indore-Khandwa section. The length of this patch is roughly 25 miles. Thus the entire Bhil belt with a total population of sixteen lakhs and a tribal population of 9 lakhs is served by 55 miles of railway line only.

In the Saharia belt district Guna has small railway route mileage falling on the Bina-Kota section of the Central Railway. Parts of Shivpuri are touched by the

narrow gauge of the Central Railway, formerly called the Scindia Light Railway. The total railway mileage in the belt would amount to roughly 150 miles.

The Gond-Korku belt has no railway line at all.

It is clear that railways play a very insignificant part in the transport of goods in the tribal areas. Inland navigation in these areas is not possible because of the hilly and seasonal nature of the rivers and streams. However underdeveloped and inadequate, it is the roads that carry the bulk of the goods. As metalled roads are few, *katcha* roads, and bridle-paths bear the burden of the major part of the traffic in the interior areas.

### *Bullock Carts*

Of the various means of transport bullockcarts are the most important. They connect the remote tribal villages and hamlets with the market places in big villages, towns and cities.

These carts and the bullocks are an old sight in rural India. The cart remain unchanged in design and efficiency through many centuries. And the bullocks are slowly deteriorating in breed and performance. So far as the draught cattle are concerned we find them getting smaller and smaller in size as we go higher up in the Vindhya and the Satpura hills. The same happens with the carts as well. As we advance in the more hilly areas their size gets smaller and weight lighter. This, probably, becomes necessary to keep pace with the draught capacity of the local breeds of cattle. In some places, as in the Gond-Korku belt, people have evolved two types of carts. One, known as the *baro garo* or the big cart, which is a heavier and a larger vehicle used for the transport of goods. The other, known as the *chakdi*, is a light and small box like trap, meant for carrying a couple of persons swiftly over difficult terrain. The chakdi costs about Rs. 80/- and the '*baro garo*' about Rs. 125/-.

### *Motor Vehicles*

It is difficult to say what volume of goods and passenger traffic is carried by the motor bus and the motor truck,

But, undoubtedly the motor transport is increasing very fast. Wherever there are metalled roads, the motor truck is also there. The extension of roads and motor transport is bringing in a perceptible change in the tribal life. The tribal is getting motor minded. Wherever motor buses pass through, the tribal cultivator accompanied by his spouse is seen boarding it with head-loads of groundnut or *makka* or chillies or *jowar* for the market. They would get down at the next village *hat*. After selling their surplus produce in the *hat*, they would secure their provisions for the week and take the evening return bus for home.

As things stand today, the motorized transport is used by the tribal people for small amounts of goods only. Most of the motor routes being away from their hamlets they can only carry head-loads of goods to the nearest bus stop several miles away. For bulky and large purchases the motor transport is not used, as it does not convey him to his door steps. Larger amounts of goods continue to be transported by bullock carts. Unit of production being small and marketable surplus being inconsiderable, hiring a whole truck is entirely out of the question. To that extent motor transport has not been able to compete with the bullock cart. Nor is it likely to, till there is a very considerable extension in the road mileage and the unit of cultivation goes up in size.

### *Head-Loads*

A very considerable amount of goods meant for village *hats* nearby, is carried in head loads. The quantity carried is very small. Light goods like cotton can be carried in very small weights only. But despite the low *per capita* quantity of goods carried in this primitive way, quite a good amount of goods is transported to the market as every member of the household who can walk carries some amount on the head. It is cheapest also, as no wages are to be paid to the members of the household, for most of whom the temptation of visiting the village *hat* is incentive enough for the irksome job. The prospect of returning light probably adds to this joy of pleasure-cum-business trip.

Besides the means of transport mentioned above relatively well-to-do tribals sometimes use ponies for the transport of goods.

### MARKETS

The various types of markets where the sale and purchase of commodities takes place are :—

- a. Travelling purchasers
- b. Fairs
- c. Village hats
- d. Mandis

#### *a. Travelling Purchasers*

The Reserve Bank of India conducted a rural credit survey in 1961 which throws a good deal of light on the aspect of village sales of agricultural produce in the rural India. The Survey Report states, "it would appear that the larger part of the produce is sold within the village".<sup>1</sup> It goes on to estimate the proportion of sale-cum-delivery transactions completed in the village itself to be 65 percent.<sup>2</sup> Large part of this sale is made to the *sahukars* (individual traders) and *dalals* (commission agents). Report says, "what is sold to them far exceeds that which is sold to Government and Cooperatives or direct to consumers, even if all the three latter are put together".<sup>3</sup> The value of produce sold to *sahukars* and *dalals* forms "about two thirds of that to all agencies."<sup>4</sup>

The tribal areas present a slightly different picture. The above mentioned general pattern exists in those communities where the villages are compact and mixed. Village sales to consumers would be considerable only when the village produces diverse types of commodities. A mixed village with potters, *telis* (oil millers), *bunkars* (weavers), blacksmith and the carpenters living in the same village as the tribal people would see a larger volume of direct sale in cash or kind. The tribal cultivator can part with his cereals and get the other manufactured articles directly from the village manufacturers in return. Such mixed villages exist, to some extent, in the Gond-Korku belt. In rural areas of the Saharia belt sometimes such

mixed villages do occur, but then the Saharia population is generally small and lives in a compact sub-area of its own. In the interior areas Saharia villages are more compact and unmixed. As the Saharia is not primarily an agriculturist he has very little of agricultural produce to dispose off. The total volume of agricultural produce sold by the Saharia cultivator, directly to the consumer in the village, would be much smaller than in the country on the whole.

In the Bhil belt, generally, the villages are neither compact nor mixed. It is more so in case of the Bhils. In Bhilalas the villages are relatively more compact and sometimes mixed. On the whole the villages in this belt are "pure". There is no variety in the produce raised and everybody produces the same thing. The village sale to consumer becomes insignificantly minor in the Bhil and Bhilala villages.

But the sales made to *sahukars* (the bania or the bohra) and *dalals* are quite considerable in the tribal areas. Between themselves these two agencies are responsible for almost the whole amount of the sales made in the tribal villages.

### *Sahukar*

The lion's share of the village sale goes to the *sahukar*. The village *sahukar* (or the *mahanjan*) is a very complex institution. He is the trader and money-lender rolled together. He is the person who holds the tribal cultivator in debt. He is the person to whom the tribal cultivator looks up when he needs seed for sowing, when he requires cereals to eat in bad years, when he needs ornaments and clothes and cash for the marriage of his son, when he needs provision for performing a death feast or a religious function. He selects the time of harvest for visiting his clients. And when he offers to purchase a particular commodity at half the market price, the cultivator is unable to resist. Sometimes this transaction takes place as a sale against cash and often as a book adjustment of some old debt. In a few cases money-lenders-cum-traders have

been known to have purchased the standing crop for almost a song. No quotation of market rate here and no haggling for the fair price. The trader names a price, the tribal has the option of either returning the loan then and there or he has to say 'yes' to the deal. If the tribal cultivator wants to sell it in the nearest market instead of selling it in the village site, he knows that he is going to face the same trader there too. He just cannot get rid of the person. Therefore, why not make the deal in the village (or hamlet) itself and save the botheration of transport? "Often enough, therefore, the cultivator's position is that of having to bargain, if he can, with someone who commands the money, commands the credit, commands the market and comes with the transport".<sup>5</sup>

### *Fairs*

Of the periodic markets, *melas* (fairs) and *hats* are the main types.

Fairs are congregations of persons and things, generally meeting annually. Fairs may last from 3 days to a month. They are of two types—religious and commercial. Religious fairs are generally connected with some religious spot and are held on a date considered 'auspicious'. Commercial fairs on the other hand are held mainly for the purposes of trade. This may relate to grains or fibres or cattle. Even religious fairs have acquired economic importance. They attract people from far and wide, and the people in turn attract traders. Most of the fairs are held on spots that lie on important trade routes. Another notable feature of most of the fairs is that they generally commence after Kartik (October-November). The rains are over by this time and the roads are open for traffic. The *kharif* is also ready, so that the agriculturist is free for sometime. With his *kharif* harvest he can make purchases in the fairs where he hopes to sell his articles at a better price and expects to procure better quality of cattle and other requisites.

Jhabua district in the Bhil belt has 35 fairs held each year. Out of this 12 are cattle fairs. In Nimar district 21

fairs are held annually, all of which are religious. As mentioned above, the fairs are generally held after the rains. An analysis of the time of the fairs held in district Jhabua shows the relationship of fairs with agricultural seasons :

Month	Number of fairs held
January	2
February	2
March	10
April	8
May	2
June	NIL
July	NIL
August	NIL
September	1
October	0
November	3
December	7
 Total	 35

We find that there are no fairs in the rainy months, as people are busy with agricultural operations and find movement in the season difficult. The season for the fairs opens as the skies clear up. By November and December fairs are in full swing. This continues right up to March and April. Highest number of fairs is observed in March and April when the *Rabi* harvest comes in the market.

Fairs are held in all the tribal belts of the State. From the point of view of the volume of agricultural commodities disposed the fairs are not of any great significance.

### *Hats*

*Hat* can be described as a tiny fair, meeting weekly on a fixed day at a fixed place. Cultivators, artisans and traders from neighbouring villages congregate in the *hats* selling their surplus produce and purchasing the articles they require.

Of all the types of markets, *hats* are economically the most important in the tribal economy. Roads and means

of transport are backward in these regions and the essential articles required by the tribal people are not available in their wild homes up on the hills. Thus the *hat* in tribal economy serves as a primary market for agricultural produce.

The utility of the *hats* in tribal life is not confined to the economic aspect alone. For the tribal *hat* is a place where they meet their relatives. It is the scene of tribal courtships and match making; of exchanging gossip and settling clan feuds. Sometimes, when old scores are settled the *hat* becomes a scene of violence. But mostly it is a peaceful place with a lot of bustle and good deal of merrymaking. The *hat* presents a lively picture with men eating and drinking and tribal belles flocking the tattoo shop and the bangle seller or the dealer in clothes and ornaments. The *hat* gives the isolated tribals a welcome change from their dull and monotonous routine.

The *hats* serve a considerable area. In the tribal areas of the State where the weekly *hat* is a regular feature with the people, the hats easily cover an area with a radius of 10 to 12 miles. The table below gives the number of *hats* in the important areas in the various tribal belts.

TABLE II

TRIBAL BELT &amp; DISTRICT WITH NUMBER OF HATS PER WEEK

No.	Tribal belt and district	Number of hats
<i>Bhil belt</i>		
1	Jhabua	39
2	Dhar	37
3	Nimar	.52
<i>Saharia belt</i>		
4	Morena	37
5	Shivpuri	24
6	Guna	18
<i>Gond-Korku belt</i>		
7	Dewas	20

Hats are controlled by the municipalities in towns and panchayats in the villages. They are so arranged

that *hats* in neighbouring areas are held on different dates. The local-body concerned allots the place where the *hat* is held. Some tax is charged for setting up the shops. The various types of commodities that the tribals bring to these *hats* in the tribal regions are as follows :

*Grains* : Mainly *makka*, *jowar*, *bajra*, *tuar* and other pulses. Sometimes wheat and rice also.

*Oilseeds* : Groundnuts, linseed and *tilli*.

*Spices and vegetables* : Chillies, onions and some vegetables like gourds and cucumbers.

In season they bring cotton. Besides the produce mentioned above they bring fuel-wood, gums, honey and other minor forest produce; *ghee*, poultry and eggs and sometimes goats and cattle for sale.

The articles they generally purchase are : cereals of all kinds, spices like *haldi* and chillies, salt, *bhang* (tobacco), *gur*, sweet oil, kerosene, earthen pots and pans, cheap alloy ornaments, readymade *cholis*, *langotis*, and other clothes.

Among weapons, tools and implements the main purchases relate to arrows, axes, ploughshares, wooden or bamboo seed drills, baskets and ropes. Sometimes cattle and poultry are also purchased.

These *hats* are a mixed affair with non-tribals monopolising the main business as *sahukars*, shopkeepers, manufacturers and artisans. It is a usual sight to see petty shopkeepers or the *munims* of the *sahukars* keeping watch on the road leading into the village *hat*. As soon as they see a tribal with a commodity they are interested in, they catch hold of him and press him to sell the commodity then and there at the price offered by them. The tribal dodges and argues but in the end generally gives in to the vile of the cunning interlocuter.

### *Mandis*

*Mandis* or big markets are of two types—the regulated and the unregulated. The regulated *mandis* are those where the marketing is by open auction and weights and measures and commission etc. are regulated on a uniform

scale to prevent exploitation of the cultivator and to ensure him a fair price of his produce. The unregulated mandis are those which are not covered by any regulations. The regulated *Mandis* number 46 in Madhya Bharat. The unregulated mandis are more numerous. The conditions in unregulated markets vary considerably. Sometimes transactions are made under cover and deals are made at prices unfair to the cultivator by keeping him in dark about the open market price. Weights and measures are not uniform and many unauthorized deductions are made from the produce.

Tribal areas in the Bhil belt are not properly served in the matter of *mandis*. Nor are *mandis* of very great significance in the tribal economy, as most of the tribal produce is sold either in the village itself or in the weekly *hat*. But as the prices obtaining in the big *mandis* affect the smaller *mandis* and *hats*, they indirectly affect the prices throughout.

### *Weights and Measures*

The weights and measures prevailing differ in the various tribal belts and vary considerably in the various parts of the same belt. For instance *Mani* consists of 6 Bengal maunds in the Indore market. In Shujalpur and other parts it consists of 3 Bengal maunds. In some places it is 12 maunds. In some places maund consists of 40 seers and in some places of 20 seers only. The weights vary from commodity to commodity as well. For instance in parts of Dhar district the maund in case of groundnut consists of 20 seers, for cotton the maund consists of 50 seers and in all cereals including *makka*, *jowar* and *dhan* the maund consists of 64 seers.

The more common weight-measures in the Saharia belt are :

4 Chhatak	1 Paua
2 Paua	1 Adhseer
4 Paua	1 Seer
5 Seers	1 Panseri

20 Seers		1 Kham man
40 Seers or		
8 Panseries		1 Pakka man
6 Man		1 Mani

In the regions of Bhil and Gond-Korku belt adjoining Malwa the following weight measures are prevalent :

4 Chhatak	=	1 Pao
4 Pao	=	1 Ser
5 Ser	=	1 Dhari
8 Dhari	=	1 Man
6 Man	=	1 Mani
100 Manis	=	1 Manasa
100 Manasa	=	1 Kanasa

In the Nimar areas dry measure of capacity is more common. All grains are sold this way. Even groundnut is marketed in terms of this measure.

The measure is :

Mulia	=	$\frac{1}{2}$ Pao
Tichia	=	1 Pao or $\frac{1}{4}$ Seer
Tuli	=	$\frac{1}{2}$ Seer
Kangan	=	1 Seer
Chauki	=	4 Seer
16 Chauki	=	1 Man
12 Man	=	1 Mani

### *Unauthorised Deductions*

Throughout the tribal areas, as in the other areas of the State, several unauthorised deductions are made from the produce at the time of sale. These are made at village sales as well as the sales in the *hats* and the *mandis*. These exactions are compulsory. Some of the more important deductions are :

- Dharmada (charities)
- Bayai and Tulai (weighment fees)
- Rusturs (customary levies)
- Gauhala (cow protection home)
- Namuna (sample)

### *Regulation of Markets*

The need of regulating the markets and of bringing about uniformity in the weights and measures, rates of commissions and deductions etc., was strongly felt after the formation of the State. Under the Chairmanship of Dr. L. C. Jain, a well known economist, a Mandi Re-organisation Committee was set up in 1949 to report on the matter. The committee submitted its report in 1950. Some important findings and recommendations of the committee are given below :

*Objective of regulation*—The committee defined the objective behind the regulation of markets to be to “ensure to the agriculturist maximum price for his produce, eliminate the possibility of exploitation of the ignorant cultivator by unscrupulous middlemen generally to reduce charges for marketing services.”<sup>6</sup>

2. It recommended the abolition of the different market charges as wheel tax, *Gadi adda* tax, *Namuna*, *Gauhala*, *Dharmada*, *Mandi Musarif*, *Tulawat*, *Hammali*, *Dalali* etc., and recommended the following uniform market charges.<sup>7</sup>

Adat at -/12/- per cent from sellers.

Dalali at -/2/- per cent from sellers and purchaser both.

Tulawat at -/1/- per maund from seller.

Hammali at -/-/6 p : maund from seller.

3. Recording all transactions taking place in the market.<sup>8</sup>

4. Provision of prompt settlement of accounts.<sup>9</sup>

5. Prevention of the use of all unauthorised weights and measures.<sup>10</sup>

6. Prohibition of all unlawful deductions.<sup>11</sup>

*Inter alia* the committee recommended that the Mandi Committee should have a proper representation of the agriculture interest, and it should undertake the functions of the publication of prices and establishment of houses.<sup>12</sup>

Another very important and pertinent recommendation of the committee related to the role of Co-operation in marketing. “In our opinion, it is very necessary to

encourage the formation of co-operative societies of growers for organising the sales of agricultural produce."

*Mandi Act:* In accordance with the recommendations of the Mandi Reorganisation Committee, the 'Madhya Bharat Agricultural Produce Markets Act' (Act No. 17 of 1962) was passed in 1952. This Act incorporates the main recommendations of the committee.

*Limitations:* The regulated markets are confined to few cash crops like cotton, gur, sugar and groundnuts. Most of the items of agricultural produce are still unregulated. The number of regulated markets is very small. The village sales continue to be made as before and village *hats* continue to be out of the regulated jurisdictions. Those items of agricultural produce which are so important in tribal economy have not been regulated at all. Thus, the Act has made no change in the position of tribal marketing. It is very doubtful if the problem can be solved without doing away with the trader-cum-sahukar, and the organisation of tribal cooperatives that may look after this aspect of agriculture as well. Multi-purpose cooperative would, probably, be the best organisation to handle this business.

## CHAPTER X

### RURAL FINANCE AND INDEBTEDNESS

"The risk", says a Bhili aphorism, "of the money-lender and the neck of the cultivator". There is a good deal of truth in this. Indebtedness is the bane of tribal economy. The peculiar economic and social background of the tribal communities of the State makes indebtedness a chronic and endemic malady.

Agriculture is of the scratchy subsistence type, subject to periodic failures. Scarcities and famines are common occurrences. Subsidiary industries are non-existent. Employment opportunities are few and not very remunerative. The general level of economic activities is extremely low and the whole economy of the tribal communities is of a permanently deficit nature. Tribal customs of marriage and death and religious ceremonies are of an expensive and wasteful nature. These customs further add to the deficit nature of their economy and inflate the debts even more.

Credit becomes indispensable to meet the social and economic needs of the tribal people. The agencies of rural finance are inadequate to meet the credit requirements of the people on reasonable terms. Most of these agencies, instead of alleviating the distress, only act to aggravate it by their unscrupulous methods of work.

The vicious circle of scarcity to credit, credit to indebtedness and indebtedness to insolvency continues unchecked.

#### *Credit Needs of the Tribal People*

The overwhelming majority of the tribal population is dependent on agriculture for its livelihood. Other occupations like forestry, transport, mining etc. are mainly sources offering wage earning opportunities. They are not of a nature requiring investments on capital or current accounts. Credit is mainly needed by the landholding agriculturist for various farm operations. Under these conditions agriculture is the only business that needs

finance. The credit needs of the tribal people broadly relate to the following types of expenditure :

1. Agricultural expenditure.
2. Non-agricultural expenditure.
3. Family expenditure.
4. Miscellaneous expenditure..

The capital expenses or farm relate to purchase of land, reclamation of land, bunding and other improvements, digging and repairs of wells, development of irrigation resources, purchase of livestock, purchase of implements and bullock carts, construction of cattle sheds and other capital expenditure.

The current farm expenditure relates to purchase of seed, manure, fodder, payment of wages, land revenue, repairs of implements and other farm expenses.

Non-farm business expenditure pertains either to capital account or to current account.

Family expenditure relates to construction of and repairs of residential houses, purchase of household utensils, death ceremonies, marriage and other ceremonies, purchase of clothings, shoes, ornaments etc. and other family expenses.

Other expenses relate to litigation charges, repayment of old debts and other expenses, if any.

#### *Pattern of Borrowings in Jhabua*

The All India Rural Credit Survey conducted an intensive survey of the Jhabua district in the Bhil belt in 1950-51. The survey reveals the typical pattern of credit needs of the tribal people. According to this survey the borrowings for each main purpose, as a percentage of total borrowings, were as below:

1. Capital expenditure on farm	...	17.6 p.c.
2. Current expenditure on farm	...	5.4 p.c.
3. Non-farm business expenditure	...	4.1 p.c.
4. Family	...	66.7 p.c.
5. Other expenditure	...	2.7 p.c.
6. More than one purpose	...	3.5 p.c.
<hr/>		
Total		100.00

As compared to this the All India pattern of the same period was:<sup>2</sup>

1. Capital expenditure on farm	...	27.8 p.c.
2. Current expenditure on farm	...	9.3 p.c.
3. Non-farm business expenditure	...	6.6 p.c.
4. Family expenditure	...	50.2 p.c.
5. Other expenditure	...	5.7 p.c.
6. More than one purpose	..	0.4 p.c.
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100 00</b>

Comparison between the general Indian pattern of borrowings for various purposes and the pattern in the tribal district of Jhabua reveals some characteristic features of the credit requirements in the tribal economy. If the first three items of expenditure are taken as productive, the Indian pattern accounts for 43.7 per cent of the total borrowings under this category. In the Jhabua district, on the other hand, the productive expenses form only 27.1 per cent of the total borrowings. The family expenditure in India accounts for 50.2 per cent of the total borrowings. In Jhabua, family expenditure accounts for 66.7 per cent of the total borrowings. Other expenditure is only 2.7 per cent in Jhabua, while in India it is 5.7 per cent.

It is apparent from the aforesaid that the tribal economy is characterised by very high unproductive expenses for which credit is required. Credit for productive purposes is proportionately much lower in tribal economy.

### *Credit and Tribal Agriculture*

This pattern is quite a natural consequence of agriculture, the basic industry of the tribal people. Subsistence farming under difficult conditions of climate and soil fertility, operationally and economically very small size of holdings and entire dependence on rains create a condition where agriculture is not a profitable business. Agricultural improvement requires much larger finances than what the cultivator can raise. The small loans that he is able to raise on the security of land are employed to meet the

precising family needs. His current expenses on the farm are very low. Generally outside labour is not employed. The large household supplies most of the labour needed on farm. Only certain operations like sowing and harvesting call for outside help. No money is spent on manures. The tribal cultivator keeps a large number of otherwise useless cattle chiefly for the manurial use. Seeds form the only major item that requires considerable investment.

Reference may again be made to the Rural Credit Survey for the distribution of expenses on the various farm needs in the Jhabua district. The total farm expenditure per family in a year amounted to Rs. 163 for all cultivators. Of this, total cash farm expenditure amounted to Rs. 103 or 63.2 per cent of the total farm expenses. The rest, Rs. 60 or 36.8 per cent, were spent in kind. Of the total cash farm expenditure per family the seeds accounted for 35.1 per cent, cash wages 3.5 per cent, fodder 12.7 per cent and other cash expenditure 48.7 per cent. No cash was spent for manures. Taking the total expenses on farm, cash and kind both, the expenditure on seed per family amounted to 53.7 per cent and for manures 12 per cent.

This can be taken as more or less the general pattern of current farm expenses in all the tribes of the State. The main item that requires finance is the provision of seeds. Land revenue, salary to farm servants etc. included in other farm expenses, account for another major factor of credit needs for farm purposes. Wages occupy a very minor place.

These current farm expenses are in the nature of very short term credit. We can safely conclude on the aforesaid discussion that the short term credit needs for agricultural purposes amount to roughly 6 per cent of the total credit requirements. The capital expenditure on farm, on the other hand, is of a medium-to-long-term nature. This amounts to roughly 18 per cent of the total agricultural credit requirements. The size of medium and long term credit for agriculture amounts to thrice the size of the short term credit requirements of agriculture. The

agricultural finance in the tribal economy has thus a bias in favour of long period loans extending from 2 years to 10 years.

### *Family Needs*

We may now pass on to the other category of credit need. The family, as we have seen, accounts for nearly 67 per cent of the total amount borrowed. This has earlier been classed as 'unproductive'. This may be done strictly from the point of view of direct productivity. But really speaking all of it is not of an unproductive or wasteful nature. The large family needs of credit, flow from and are a direct consequence of deficit agriculture. The Rural Credit Survey has estimated this deficit by making an inventory of total assets and liabilities of the rural population of Jhabua, particularly the cultivators. This is revealed by the tables in the Report dealing with investment and dis-investment.<sup>3</sup>

### *Lower Strata Cultivators in Jhabua (1950-51)*

Average total Investment	...	Rs. 28/-
Average borrowings	...	Rs. 53/-
Average sale of assets	...	Rs. 44/-
Average total disinvestment	...	Rs. 97/-
Average net investment (-)	...	Rs. 69/-

Thus, the tribal economy is running in sharp deficits. Consequently, even the ordinary family needs of clothing, bedding, shoes, death and marriage ceremonies etc. have to be met from family borrowings. As many of the family expenses are meant to supply the workers with sustenance in the working period they are not entirely unproductive either. As a matter of fact, it is idle to differentiate between productive and unproductive loans in a chronically deficit economy. The whole family contributes its labour to the family holding. In return it is entitled to the fulfilment of its basic needs. The so called unproductive needs cannot be denied, by and large, just because they are not directly productive. All expenses for sustenance, whether they are related to food

and clothing or marriage and death, are in the nature of investments. Without meeting these requirements the family efficiency cannot be maintained.

The expenses incurred on various family needs would help us to understand how 67 per cent of the borrowings are spent on this category.

The Rural Credit Survey reveals that an average cultivator in Jhabua annually spends Rs. 140 on the various items of family expenditure. The non-cultivator spends only Rs. 70/- annually.

*House*: Amount spent on repairs and construction of houses is the lowest in Jhabua as compared to the whole of country. It is only Rs. 2/- annually.

*Marriage*: Of the total annual expenditure of Rs. 140/-, the cultivator spends Rs. 50/- on marriage. The non-cultivator spends much-less, only Rs. 18/-. The non-cultivator in this area is generally a landless person whose capacity to raise finance for the ceremony is deplorably low as he has few assets against which a loan may be secured.

*Death*: Death ceremonies are a cheaper affair. They do not account for more than Rs. 2/- per cultivating family.

The largest sum is spent on the purchase of durable consumer goods like clothes, shoes, bedding, ornaments etc. An average cultivator spends Rs. 76/- per annum on this item. The non-cultivator spends only Rs. 5/-.

### *Position in Various Tribes*

The statistics given above relate to the Bhils and the Bhilalas that form the overwhelming population of the Jhabua district. As primarily agriculturists the credit requirements in Bhilalas are perhaps the highest. It is a general truism that larger the size of holdings the larger is the need of finance. Farm operations require more investment. Capital and current expenses increase with the improvement in the economic status of the cultivator, his social status also moves up. His expenses on social accounts go up appreciably. A rich cultivator

spends more on marriage, more on clothes and more on education. The Bhilala being higher in the scale of social hierarchy, as compared to Bhils and Harijans, has to spend much more. Thus, relatively speaking, his credit requirements are much greater than of any other tribe.

The Bhil comes next. He is a petty landholder, and he requires finance for farm operations as well as family expenses. But the volume of finance required by him is much smaller as compared to the Bhilala.

The Gonds and the Korkus have very little land with them as compared to the Bhils and the Bhilalas. Their financial requirements are mostly for family expenses.

The landless Saharia is perhaps the last in the economic scale. As primarily an agricultural labourer and forester he does not ask for much of credit although he could use a good deal of credit for purchasing new land. But he is unable to raise any, as he has no property of any sort which may stand as security.

#### SOURCES OF FINANCE

The various sources supplying finance in the tribal areas are as follows :

- (i) State
- (ii) Co-operative Societies
- (iii) Relations
- (iv) Private agencies.

I have purposely left out the commercial banks from the list as they have almost insignificant place in tribal economy. In 1950-51, there was no commercial bank functioning in Jhabua.<sup>4</sup> In other areas there are commercial banks in the large towns but they are out of the reach of the tribal. They do not supply the sort of credit he needs and he cannot supply the security that they require.

I propose to deal here with the main sources of finance as revealed by the general Indian pattern.

**State:** The State helps the cultivators through loans known as *taccavi*. This type of loan is given for the agricultural purposes. Mostly the *taccavi* used to be given for the sake of seeds in bad years. It is also given

for purchase of bullocks and the sinking of wells. The rate of interest charged is 5 per cent per annum.

At this low rate of interest *taccavi* should have been the most popular source of rural credit.<sup>5</sup> But in practice the advantage of the low rate of interest is offset by its deplorable administration. The quantum of *taccavi* budgeted for each tehsil is highly inadequate to form any substantial source of help to the cultivator. Besides inadequacy it is marked by unduly long delays in the actual disbursement. It is estimated that at least 22 per cent of *taccavi* loans were disbursed in Jhabua after a time lag of eight months or more.<sup>6</sup> As a matter of fact, in many areas the *taccavi* is delayed longer than this. One tribal applied for *taccavi* to replace a bullock that died last season in August. He made the application immediately. But he could not get the *taccavi* in time for the next kharif despite frantic appeals to the authorities.

The quota granted to each cultivator is highly inadequate. The well-*taccavi* is never adequate to dig a well. The bullock-*taccavi* is never sufficient to purchase a bullock.

Another reprehensible practice found in many tribal areas of the State is to deduct a sizeable amount of the *taccavi* loan as compulsory national saving. The usual rate of small bonds to be purchased compulsorily was 5 per cent of the total sum of *taccavi*. This further reduces the usefulness of the *taccavi* by reducing its size.

From application to the final disbursement of *taccavi* each stage has to be 'greased' by bribes and other illegal gratifications to insure progress of the loan application. In one tribal area the tehsil staff had evolved a new term for these bribes. Unless an application was accompanied by a rupee coin, the clerk would not allow it to lie on his table. "Your application is flying, put some weight over it", the clerk would say. The reluctant tribal would take out a rupee and place it on top of the application.

Misuse of *taccavi* is also not uncommon. One occasionally comes across cases where *taccavi* is not used by the cultivator for the purpose he had asked it for.

Sometimes only a part of the taccavi is used for the agricultural purpose and the other part is used for feasts or marriages or liquor.

By its very nature of State budgeting and the machinery of disbursement taccavi creates more problem than it solves. Lack of proper supervision leads to its misuse and the hard terms of realisation discourage the petty cultivator.

It is time taccavi is switched back to loans in kind. Good quality of improved seeds suitable to the soil conditions of the area may be supplied as grain taccavi and realised at the harvest time. No interest need be charged on such loans. In the same way if a bullock is required, the department of animal husbandry should supply the cultivator with a suitable bullock. In case a well-taccavi is required the State P.W.D. should undertake the digging of the well. The tribal should supply the labour, and the P.W.D. the machines and the technical skill. The security should be no consideration and the disbursement should be adequate and timely.

### *Cooperative Societies*

It has been pointed out that co-operative societies do not supply more than 3 per cent of the total borrowings in the rural India.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of quantitative estimates we cannot say exactly what proportion of borrowings in the tribal areas of the State originate from the co-operatives. From what I have seen of the working of the co-operative movement in the tribal areas, it is obvious that their role in tribal rural credit must be even more insignificant. It may be somewhat upsetting to a votary of co-operation but it is a fact that not only are the co-operatives few in the tribal areas, but that they charge as high as 12 per cent interest. Combined with 6 per cent of fine for late payments, the total interest works out to 18 per cent. With these exorbitant rates of interest is attached the most orthodox insistence on security. All in all, co-operatives find hardly any place in the financial map of the tribal Central India. If anything, they are museum pieces in a state of total defunct.

### *Relatives*

In the Indian pattern relatives account for 14 per cent of the total rural borrowings.<sup>8</sup> Here again we find a different position in the tribal areas. Widespread poverty in the tribal areas does not permit a rich class of cultivators among the tribals. The only exception is the Bhilala tribe. Some Bhilalas and Berelas (a subtribe of Bhilalas) are rich cultivators with large property in land and cash. Among the Bhilalas and Berelas the more well to do relatives help the poorer ones with occasional loans for various purposes. Relatives would account for some percentage of the borrowings in the tribe. From the point of view of total borrowings this source would be very insignificant even among this tribe. In Bhils the poverty is much greater and therefore very few Bhils have money to spare for their needy kith and kin. In those few cases where such finance is forthcoming the size of loan is generally very small. Among Gonds and Korkus, the relatives are, as a source of finance, even more insignificant. The last in this scale are Saharias.

In cases where the size of loan is considerable, generally land is held as security and a low rate of interest, 6 to 9 per cent is charged. Mostly such deals are made on stamped paper.

### *Private Agencies*

Private agencies of credit include the agriculturist money-lenders. In the tribal areas the agriculturist money-lenders are few. Professional money-lenders sometimes carry on cultivation with the help of *halis*. But agriculture is not their principal occupation. It is only a side industry. It is made possible only because of the influence he comes to wield over the tribals as a money-lender. For all practical purposes it is the village *sahukar*, the *bania* or the *bohra*, who is the indigenous banker. As has been seen, he is not only a banker but he is also a wholesaler and retailer, a commission agent, a cultivator, sometimes a truck owner and even a manufacturer. He combines many trades in his person and exercises a great influence

on the local population. When he also happens to be the local political leader, as is generally the case in Madhya Bharat, he is the monarch of all he surveys, and even government officials dare not dispute his rights.

The village money-lender or *sahukar* exercises a great influence over the life of the tribals. The tribal cultivator looks up to him for loans for seeds, for bullocks and implements. When the crop is ready, it is the *sahukar* who purchases his produce. When the tribal needs clothes and ornaments, it is the *sahukar* who supplies them to him. When in bad years the tribal runs short of grains, the *sahukar* helps him with the grain loan. For land revenue, the *sahukar* is the source of credit. When the co-operative society has to be paid its outstanding dues, the *sahukar* obliges, perhaps with a mischievous smile. It is not only the economic life of the tribal which is dominated by the *sahukar*. He is the person to be remembered when cash and provisions for marriage are needed. At the time of tribal festivals and religious functions the *sahukar* is the person who helps him. From birth to death every activity of the tribal is dependent on the village *sahukar*. The *sahukar* is quite conscious of this stranglehold on the tribal life. Despite legislations he continues to charge usurious rate of interest and continues to make false entries. The tribal is always willing to put his thumb-mark on the papers that the *sahukar* presents to him. By this magic an old debt becomes a new debt and by changing the principal advanced the high rate of interest becomes a low rate of interest. Even when the tribal knows that he is being cheated, he is not willing to repudiate the debt. For he knows that but for the *sahukar* his life would be impossible. The *sahukar* is an evil person, but he is indispensable.

In the course of my investigations I came across a very typical case of a tribal's sustained loyalty to the *sahukar* even when he knew that he was being used unfairly and was being put to illegal exactions. A Bhil had taken a loan of cash and kind valued at roughly Rs. 100/-, some 30 years back. Since then almost every year he had been giving 10-12 maunds of millets to the *sahukar*. Besides

the grain he had given the following things during the course of 30 years towards the payment of the original debt :

			Rough estimate of value.
(i)	1 buffalo	...	Rs. 150/-
(ii)	1 bullock	...	Rs. 50/-
(iii)	1 mere	...	Rs. 30/-
(iv)	Wood for house building	...	Rs. 40/-
(v)	1 cow	...	Rs. 70/-
(vi)	Again a bullock	...	Rs. 50/-
(vii)	Again a bullock	...	Rs. 50/-
			<hr/>
	Total		Rs. 440/-
			<hr/>

The *sahukar* had recently told him that outstanding debt against him was Rs. 1,200/- and 6 manis of grain.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the obvious enormity of the dishonesty of the *sahukar* this Bhil was not ready to repudiate the debt and use the legal machinery for setting right the injustice. This psychology of the tribal cultivator has now crystallised into a strong custom. In his set of social values the exactions of the *sahukar* are not a matter to be discussed in law courts. When differences arise, and they sometimes do, the *tarvi* (the leader of the community) or the village *patel* act as mediators. Generally there is a *razinama* (agreement) outside the court. This *razinama* is usually obeyed by both the parties.

The *sahukar* always keeps his eyes fixed on some property of the cultivator. When the cultivator defaults, that property is taken over by the *sahukar*. No legal document is signed and no law is cited. By practice and usage the *sahukar* becomes the owner of property. In the Bhil belt mango trees are generally attached in this way. The *sahukar* takes the fruit without doing anything for its protection. That is the responsibility of the cultivator. The tribal dare not touch the fruit of this tree.

*Khandpa* is another practice that reveals the astounding nature of the extra-judicial process of financial settlements in the tribal areas. When the total debt becomes large

and unbearable it undergoes *khandna*, or reduction. The *tarvi* and a few other influential members of the community and the village assemble at some place. The *sahukar* places his claims before the assembly. The tribal expresses his inability to carry the colossal burden and announces his willingness to get the debt reduced in size. On this, the *sahukar* suggests a plan. Cows, buffaloes, bullocks, grass, grain and other chattel are made over to the money-lender. They are valued and the total sum of the debt is reduced by that amount. Needless to say that since the village and community leaders are themselves under the obligation of the *sahukar*, the property attached is always undervalued and the settlement is always in the latter's favour. The assembled big wigs bear witness to the settlement and the deal gets a social and ethical sanction that nobody can dare to violate with impunity.

### *Form of Loan*

The borrowings are made from the money-lender in cash as well as in kind. Cash is borrowed when the money-lender does not happen to deal with those articles which the tribal needs. Cash is also borrowed where it is to be given as *dahej* (dowry) or where the land revenue is to be paid. As generally the money-lender is the owner of the village tail shop as well, he is able to supply the various agricultural and domestic requirements of the cultivator himself. In that case cash loan becomes redundant. Generally, loans meant for domestic needs are in kind. Cloth, bedding, grains for consumption, sugar, oil etc. can be had without the medium of cash.

### *The Rate of Interest*

The rate of interest in the tribal areas, particularly in the Bhil-belt, is very high. It varies from less than 3½ per cent per annum to 50 per cent per annum and more. The more common rates of interest are 25 per cent, known as *sawan*.

Generally, grains like *jowar*, *bajra* and wheat, oilseeds like groundnut and linseed and fibre seeds like cotton-seed

are borrowed on *sawan*. Mostly these are in the nature of seed loans. But sometimes they are taken for consumption purposes as well. If one maund of grain is borrowed in the summer, the cultivator will return one maund and 10 seers at the harvest time. This is usually referred to as *sawan*, but in practice it amounts to nearly 50 per cent as the period of loan is not one year but only 6 months. But the grains are costlier at the time of loan and much cheaper at the harvest time. Therefore the rate of interest amounts to a little less than 50 per cent.

Another practice is to lend the seed and ask for the final produce. For instance, if 1 maund of *kapasya* or *kunkda* (cotton seed) is borrowed before the rains, the cultivator asks for 30 seers of cotton at the end of the season. The cotton seed sells at the rate of Rs. 14/- per maund when the rate for cotton is Rs. 25/- per maund. It means that for Rs. 14/- worth of seeds the cultivator returns Rs. 19/- worth of cotton. For a six month period the interest amounts to roughly 35.7 per cent.

Usually grains for consumption are given on an interest of 50 to 75 per cent. For one maund of grain borrowed the cultivator has to return from 10 seers to 30 seers more than the amount borrowed.

For other articles like cloth, ornaments, implements and even cash, not less than an interest of 25 per cent is charged. If we were to consider under-weighing of the articles sold by the *sahukar* and the high prices charged, the rate would be considerably higher.

The rate of interest charged by the money-lenders from the tribal people and other backward people is highly usurious. The rate of interest is higher in the Bhil-belt as compared to the Saharia-belt. The average loan borrowed per family and the rate of borrowing in Jhabua district in the Bhil belt and the Shivpuri district in the Saharia belt show this difference in unmistakeable terms.<sup>10</sup>

•TABLE I

AVERAGE BORROWINGS\* AND RATES OF INTEREST IN  
JHABUA AND SHIVPURI (Period: April 1951—March 1952)

Jhabua	The amount borrowed per family (Rs)	Rate of interest at which borrowed	Shivpuri	
			The amount borrowed (Rs)	Average loan borrowed per family
Rs. 53.1	1.4	Less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ p.c.	—	Rs. 24.5
	1.4	$3\frac{1}{2}$ to 7 p.c.	15.5	
	—	7 to 10 p.c.	2.9	
	2.3	10 to $12\frac{1}{2}$ p.c.	—	
	0.1	$12\frac{1}{2}$ to 18 p.c.	—	
	—	18 to 25 p.c.	6.1	
	15.3	25 to 35 p.c.	—	
	—	35 to 50 p.c.	—	
	32.6	50 p.c. and above	—	

It is seen that out of the average per family borrowing of Rs. 53.1 in Jhabua, only Rs. 2.8 were borrowed at less than 7 p.c. per annum and only Rs. 2.3 on 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  p.c. The sums borrowed at 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  p.c. and less, thus amount to Rs. 5.1 only. As against this Rs. 15.3 were borrowed at 25 to 35 p.c. And Rs. 32.6 were borrowed at the staggering rate of 50 p.c. and above. Thus more than 61 per cent of the amount borrowed in the area was on an interest of 50 per cent or more per annum.

Comparatively speaking the degree of usuriousness was less in Shivpuri. Out of the total average borrowings of Rs. 24.5 per family, roughly 63 per cent was borrowed at the rate of 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 7 p.c. Only Rs. 6.1 were borrowed at 10 to 25 p.c. Lower rate of interest in this area is most probably due to the extension in recent years of the forest and other types of cooperatives.

*Security*

The village *sahukar* has another advantage which the institutional sources do not possess. The co-operatives and the State bother about the assets and the liabilities, the value of the property and other factors of security. They

would ascertain the market value of the property before the loan would be made out. The amount of loan granted would bear a strict correlation with the value of property. The *sahukar* does not bother about these things much. For him the land is security enough. If a tribal cultivator has land, the *sahukar* would lend him without much delay and without much of paper work. The getting of loan is a matter of a few hours. No cumbersome formalities are involved. A few witnesses, whom the *Sahukar* knows, sign the document, and the loan is ready.

Certainly this easy procedure involves a great deal of risk for the *sahukar*. But he knows the psychology of his tribal clients. He knows that the unsophisticated tribal is a man who can be trusted to stick to his word of honour. The ethics of the tribal would compel the tribal not to break it. In this social and ethical setting, the risk of bad-debts is very small. Objectively speaking the risk involved is much less than what is generally made out to be. And in comparison to the little risk involved the gains are unreasonably high. In view of the high rates of interest charged by him, and other book manipulations he indulges in, the profits in money-lending must be very high indeed.

### INDEBTEDNESS

#### *Proportion of Indebtedness*

There is a good deal of indebtedness among the tribals of the State. Broadly the indebtedness is related to occupation. It is more in case of the cultivating families than in the non-cultivating families. Among the cultivating tribals in general not only is a greater percentage of families indebted, but the average size of debt is also larger. The Rural Credit Survey has estimated that in Jhabua 79.2 per cent of all families were indebted in 1950-51.<sup>11</sup> The proportion of indebtedness among the cultivators amounted to 82.4 per cent and among the non-cultivators only 7.0 per cent. In Shivpuri the Rural Credit Survey estimated 60.6 per cent indebtedness among all families.<sup>12</sup> The proportion of the indebted among the

cultivators here amounted to 65.3 per cent and among non-cultivators 36.6 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

This reveals the general pattern in the two important tribal zones of the State. The percentage of indebtedness is higher in the Bhil belt than in the Saharia belt. The higher proportion of the indebted among the cultivators is a common feature of rural indebtedness in our country, specially in the subsistence areas, like the Tribal areas of the State. Cultivators need more credit for farm operations and for making good the deficits they occasionally run into. They can also get more credit as compared to other rural classes by virtue of the security of land they hold. Landless class is greater in the Shiyipuri district, therefore the general indebtedness is less. Lower percentage of indebtedness among cultivators is due to the fact that the district includes many parts of Malwa Plateau which are quite fertile and quite a good number of them enjoy the facilities of irrigation.

The Survey conducted by the author shows that the indebtedness among Bhils of all classes is 60 per cent and among Bhilalas 50.6 per cent. The Saharias have 28 per cent of indebtedness, Korkus 45 per cent and Gonds 35 per cent. This reveals a definite pattern. The Bhils and the Bhilalas form one group with very high indebtedness. The second group consists of the Korkus and the Gonds with roughly 40 per cent indebtedness. The third group consists of the Saharias with only 28 per cent of indebtedness.

Broadly, this pattern of indebtedness conforms to the occupational pattern. Greater the dependence on agriculture in the tribal areas of the State, the greater is the degree of indebtedness. The Bhils and the Bhilalas who are predominantly cultivators show the greatest indebtedness. Gonds and the Korkus have relatively less land with them and they are less indebted. The Saharia is predominantly landless and he is the least indebted.

### *Size of Indebtedness*

The size of indebtedness like the proportion of indebtedness, differs from belt to belt and within the belt

from tribe to tribe. The Rural Credit Survey estimates the average debt per family (all families) to be Rs. 192 in Jhabua. The average per-family debt in the same area for cultivators was estimated as Rs. 200 and non-cultivators Rs. 10 only.<sup>14</sup> The same source estimates the average debt per family (all families) to be Rs. 227 in Shivpuri. Here the average debt per cultivating family is Rs. 253 and average debt per non-cultivator is estimated to Rs. 96.<sup>15</sup>

The two belts again show a different pattern. Although the proportion of indebted is higher in the Bhil belt as compared to the Saharia belt, the average size of debt in the latter is higher as compared to the former belt.

Taking each tribe we find from the author's survey that the size of debt as among various tribes is distributed as shown in the table below :

TABLE II

No.	Size of debt (Rs.)	Percentage of indebtedness in each size				
		Bhil	Bhilala	Saharia	Korku	Gond
1.	1 to 99	33.4	21.0	57.0	7.7	—
2.	100 to 199	10.0	21.0	39.0	30.7	—
3.	200 to 299	18.8	11.8	4.0	23.7	40.0
4.	300 to 499	21.2	15.8	—	7.7	60.0
5.	500 to 699	6.6	9.3	—	7.7	—
6.	700 to 999	1.2	9.3	—	7.7	—
7.	1000 and above	8.8	11.8	—	15.3	—

The table shows that among the Bhils the highest percentage of debts are of a small size-less than Rs. 99/- . This accounts for 33.4 per cent of the indebted families. Ten per cent families have debts ranging from 100 to Rs. 199. Only 18.8 per cent of families have debts ranging from 200 to 299, and 21.2 per cent from Rs. 300 to 499. Thus 83.4 per cent of the debts are of a size of Rs. 500 and less. Only 16.6 per cent debts are above the size of Rs. 500. It is observed that for the overwhelming Bhil families the debts are of a small size.

In Bhilalas the debts below Rs. 500 account for 69.6 per cent of the families indebted. The families having debts of Rs. 500 or more amount to 30.4 per cent. The size of debt in Bhilalas is larger than in the Bhils. Even in the size Rs. 1,000 and above Bhilalas show a percentage of 11.8 while the Bhils show only 8.8 per cent.

In Saharias 57 per cent of the debts are of a size below Rs. 100. Debts in the size of Rs. 100 to 199 amount to 39 per cent. And debts in the size Rs. 200 to 299 account for only 4 per cent of the debts. The indebtedness among the Saharias is very much less as compared to the Bhils and the Bhilalas.

Korkus have a concentration of debts in sizes below Rs. 500. This category accounts for 69.8 per cent of the debts. Debts of Rs. 500 and above account for 30.2 per cent of the debts. This tribe shows an unusually high percentage in the category of Rs. 1,000 and above. This, again, may be put down to the small size of the sample taken which happened to include big cultivators with over-size debts.

Gonds show all debts below the size of Rs. 500.

#### *Legislation regarding Money-lending*

The need of regulating and controlling the usurious and other unfair activities of the money-lenders has been felt for a long time. T. C. Thakkar Bapa Committee<sup>16</sup> had also given due consideration to this problem with particular reference to the scheduled tribes and the scheduled areas. In 1950 the Madhya Bharat Government brought forward a legislation to control the money-lending business in the State. This was known as the *Moneylenders Act* (Act No. 62 of 1950). Initially the Act was applicable only to those moneylenders who advanced loans to agriculturists. The Act provided for the registration of every moneylender by an application to the sub-registrar of any pargana of the district or districts in which the principal place of his business was located. Any moneylender who failed to register himself as provided under the Act was prohibited from bringing any suit against a client for the recovery of his loans.

The Act had another very important provision which related to the maintenance of accounts by moneylenders and the furnishing of the complete accounts of debts to every debtor every year duly signed by the moneylender or his agent, *munim* or *gumashta*. This yearly statement of accounts was to be furnished to the debtor within three months of the *Diwali* (*Kartik Badi Amavas*) of each year. With respect to the total size of the arrears the Act provided that in no case should the arrears of interest exceed, when added to interest already paid, the amount of the principal.

In exercise of the powers confirmed by the Money-lenders Act of 1950 the Revenue Department framed elaborate rules for the implementation of the Act.

Despite these legal provisions there seems to be hardly any improvement in the situation. Somehow or the other this Act is not being rigorously enforced and there is no supervision of the records that each moneylender was asked to maintain under the Act. Utter apathy of the ignorant and poverty stricken tribal on one hand and the cleverness of the *sahukar* on the other does not create the conditions for making this Act anything more than a dead letter.

## CHAPTER XI

### COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

The philosophy of Cooperation, is ideally suited to the socio-economic needs of the tribal people, particularly to those tribal communities which are in contact with the 'civilized' and are consequently facing exploitation. The only way they can avoid this ruthless exploitation is the adoption of the cooperative method. As a method of organisation, cooperation is much more efficient and economical than the individual isolated method. For better production and marketing, cheaper purchases and profitable sales, cooperation is the most ideally suited method.

The historical background of cooperation in India and abroad unmistakably brings out the fact that the cooperative method is ideally suited to the climate of poverty and distress. In such a 'climate', where the individual is powerless against an unfriendly nature and a social system based on unrestricted profiteering, the only shelter is that of a Cooperative Society. In Cooperation alone lies the hope of the salvation of the teeming millions hovering on the brink of economic doom.

The tribal areas of Madhya Bharat are highly susceptible to scarcies and famines. They are, as a matter of fact, areas of chronic imbalance where the tribal people are impoverished and debt-ridden. They are exploited by the forest contractor, the liquor vendor, village *bania* and the *Bohra* and other non-tribal plains-folk of all types. In the village *hat* and the town market, they are overcharged for the goods they purchase and underpaid for the goods they dispose off. Being illiterate and needy, they are willing to sign on any line dotted by the *mahajan*. Being incredibly honest and loyal, they would abide by such contracts even if they are against the existing laws and their self interest. They will seek no redress in the court of law, and continue to be exploited.

The scope of cooperation in the tribal areas is not restricted to credit. In the field of production there is a

wide scope for the cooperative method.<sup>1</sup> The primitive methods of cultivation and soil management need a change. Soil erosion requires to be checked. Contour bunding, terracing, etc., are necessary. A successful implementation of these can be effected easily with cooperative method. For composting and better manuring, better skill and organized effort is needed. For better animal husbandry and dairying concerted action is required. Forest is another very important source of livelihood to the tribal people. Here the exploitation of the tribal is the greatest. The contractor and the Forest Department, both these agencies operate against the interests of the tribal people. The scope for cooperation, particularly in the field of the collection, processing and sale of minor produce is vast. Major produce can also be exploited by the tribal cooperatives without the ubiquitous contractor and the middleman figuring anywhere. Cottage industries of diverse types have wide potential field in the tribal areas. Here again the individual action would be of no avail. To meet all the needs of raw materials, tools, technique, designs and marketing of cottage handicrafts cooperatives would be ideally suited.

Lately it is being recognized that "a cooperative society cannot confine its activities merely to the provision of credit or catering for the daily necessities of its members; its aim should be broader and embrace all aspects of the individual life." In an anxiety to supply credit to the cultivator, several basic principles and objectives of cooperation were forgotten in India. The social aspect of well-being was not given the due place. Cooperation came to be regarded merely as an agency supplying easy and cheap credit. It was forgotten that the cooperative movement had its beginning as a moral movement. Raiffeisen had clearly stated in the rules of his society that "the object of the society is to improve the situation of its members, both materially and morally". This moral aspect was stressed by the Rochdale pioneers as well. The cooperative movement cannot succeed on self interest alone. Unless the selfish motive is checked and the motive of mutual

help is generated, there would be no force to bind the cooperators together. That has largely been the failing of the movement in our country. This aspect assumes greater importance in non-literate tribal communities. The social conditions there, in certain cases, are lamentable. The habit of drink, religious superstition, faith in magic and witchcraft, customs of wasteful marriage ceremonies and death feasts, extremely low standards of literacy and education, bad health and sanitation, bitter quarrels and violence over women are some of the social problems needing urgent attention. These social problems have a bearing on the economic well-being of the tribals. Their proper solution is essential for the all-sided development of the tribal people. Cooperation again has a wide scope in this field.

The tribal communities of Madhya Bharat, fortunately, have the temperament to work together. All these tribes have well-knit social organizations. They have long traditions of helping members of their class in times of need. In a Bhil marriage, as has been discussed earlier, each relative of the bridegroom brings him presents in cash and kind to lessen the burden of the bride-price. In community feasts, they have a practice to bring their own goats, fowls and wild game for the common kitchen. Even in the field of economic activity they have the custom known as 'leh' under which groups of villagers go to work on the fields and huts of their relatives and friends. No wages are paid for this help. But the host treats them respectfully. In turn, the host goes to the help of others on the same terms. Such instances can be multiplied. The blood ties are very strong in these tribes and they have learnt to depend on their kinsmen for help in time of distress and are only too willing to render the same help if desired by others. Sights of collective actions in economic and social fields are not rare in the tribal villages. In one village in the Sailana tehsil, Bhilalas were seen manufacturing country tiles on a cooperative basis, being totally unaware of the potential of such a method for larger application. As a matter of fact, tribal existence under very adverse physical and climatic conditions would not

have been possible without a good deal of cooperative and corporate life. They are not new to the idea of working together on the basis of self help and mutual help. As a way of life they are quite familiar with it, though in a limited field. Its extension now to a larger field, and its conversion to an organized method would not be a difficult task if handled with understanding, sympathy and selflessness.

### *History of Cooperative Movement in Madhya Bharat*

Madhya Bharat had a very uneven growth of the cooperative movement in its constituent states. These states varied in size and administrative set up quite considerably. Some had up-to-date administrative machinery with comparatively progressive views regarding the well-being of their subjects. While there were some lost in orgies of self indulgence, with not a single thought about the toiling masses in whose sweat sailed the ship of their wanton and wasteful luxuries. At the time of integration, the states of Gwalior and Indore had fairly well developed cooperatives. In Dewas, Narsingharh, Khilchipur, Ratlam and Rajgarh, the movement had made some progress. In other states the cooperative movement was not known at all. The Indore (Holkar) State of the Madhya Bharat State, was the first to initiate the co-operative movement in 1914. In the Gwalior State the movement started in 1918. Among the smaller states, there was very little by way of organized cooperative movement. Dewas State had some urban cooperative societies on the model of Bombay. Ratlam had one State Cooperative Bank, always in a sickly state which had to be brought under liquidation before merger. At the time of merger the Indore and Gwalior were the only states which had well developed cooperative movements with branches in the tribal areas.

The Indore State had a Central Bank in Petlawad, a Bhil tract; one in Kannod, the Gond-Korku tract; and primary societies throughout the Bhil-Bhilala and Gond-Korku tract extending over the several districts of the State.

In the same way the Saharia belt of the Gwalior State as well as the Bhil Bhilala tract of Sardarpur district in the south had witnessed the extension of the movement in their zones. But these societies and banks in the tribal belts did not mean that there was in general, any effort, to adapt these societies to the needs of the tribal communities. Tribal people could join these societies as others did, but with no special privileges and emphasis on their needs. Since they were not constituted to meet the requirements of the tribal people, very few tribals had availed the opportunity of getting enrolled as members.

The first real effort in the direction of tribal co-operation can be said to have begun with the publication of Prof. Kale's report on co-operative movement in the former Gwalior State in 1937. During the course of his extensive tours, Prof. Kale visited the Sardarpur district and studied the basic features of the Bhil economy. "These people are almost primitive," wrote Kale, "and it will take several years and a lot of expenditure to improve their conditions. Their social organisation is peculiar and their village of a crude type. Having little credit of their own, they become easy victims of exploitation. Owing to the extremely small size of the Bhil hamlets, which are scattered in the jungle, and the scanty population occupied in agriculture, no co-operative society started for them is likely to be self-supporting on account of its limited business." The absence of literacy and the general backwardness led Kale to recommend that, "the State should, therefore, assist the hill tribes by advancing money for their legitimate needs through co-operative societies to be controlled and managed by the State."

At that time the Bombay Government had been working in the adjoining Bhil tract of Dohad Taluka on the above lines. Prof. Kale suggested the desirability of studying the functioning of the movement in Dohad Taluka and stressed the need of adopting it for the uplift of the Bhils in the areas of the State.

In accordance with the recommendations of Prof. Kale the Gwalior Government deputed an Inspector to Dohad to

study the working of cooperation among the tribal people. On his return this officer was posted to work in the Bagh area (now District Dhar) inhabited predominantly by the Bhils. This attention led to rapid growth of the movement in the area. The number of the societies rose to 72 in 1948. A scale and purchase union was also organised.

In Holkar State also, sometime before the merger, a special committee had recommended that, "by intensive official action cooperative development should be brought about among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes".

### *Karve Committee Report*

But, by far the biggest landmark in the history of tribal cooperation was the constitution of the Madhya Bharat Cooperative Planning Committee under the Chairmanship of Prof. D. G. Karve in December, 1951. The Karve Committee Report, submitted in June 1952, dealt with the problems of tribal cooperation in a most exhaustive and penetrating manner. As this Committee was constituted in a free and Independent India that had recently adopted a new Constitution and declared itself a Democratic Republic, the tribal problem had started being viewed from a new angle. The Directive Principles in the Constitution stressed the need of bringing the Scheduled Tribes to the level of the rest of people. This change was reflected in the terms of reference of the Karve Committee. Among other things the Committee was asked to go into "the subject of special provision of cooperative aids in the development of the tribal areas." The Karve Committee stressed the need of special types of cooperatives for the tribal areas and made many pertinent recommendations. As an experimental measure it suggested that in the tribal areas three tehsils should be selected for intensive and comprehensive co-operative development. The tehsils selected were :

- (i) Kukshi which covered areas belonging to former Gwalior and Dhar States;
- (ii) Ratlawad, belonging formerly to the Holkar State, where cooperative movement was quite well established; and

(iii) Rajpur, in Nimar which is a community project area.

The experience gained in these selected societies for a minimum period of three years, was to form the basis for the extension of the movement all over the tribal area.

### *Cooperatives in the Tribal Areas*

Despite the fact that the tribal communities need the cooperative method of organisation more than other communities, the cooperative movement does not show much success in these areas. The chief cause of this limited success, and in some cases utter failure, is due to the wholesale application of the Raiffeisen model in the tribal areas without any effort to adapt it to the peculiar conditions of the areas. Unlimited liability, self help and non-interference by the State was made much of. There was no attention given to the need of suitable changes in the theory of cooperation to suit the soil they were being transplanted in.

The need to have different types of co-operatives for the tribal people was realised in Madhya Bharat as far back as 1937 when the Kale Committee recommended that "the Government should assist the Bhils through a special type of co-operative society to be managed under official control".<sup>6</sup> Karve Committee, deliberating some fifteen years afterwards, stressed the fact that, "A form of co-operative organisation which will suit an advanced community where members have not only fair strength in economic resources but are also sufficiently familiar with the process of business organisation, will not function in these backward communities".<sup>7</sup> Appreciating the protective and the developmental role of the co-operative societies the Karve Committee felt the need of a 'special approach' for the extension of the movement in these areas. The Committee observed, that a study of the co-operative societies in these areas, "has impressed upon us the need for having an intensive as well as specially adapted form of co-operative development for tribal people".<sup>8</sup>

Karve Committee, on the lines of the recommendations of the Kale Committee, suggested that 'unless all the needs of the tribal people were capable of being met through co-operative institutions of finance they will not be enabled to have that confidence and ease on which alone an organisation of self-reliance can be based'."

Proceeding on the above mentioned assumptions the Karve Committee made the following recommendations for a proper growth of co-operation among the tribal people.

- (1) The type of co-operative society suited to the needs of the tribal areas should be of multi-purpose character.
- (2) The creation of a separate co-operative Central Bank to meet the needs of the tribal co-operative societies all over the State.
- (3) The management of the tribal societies should evolve a special pattern in which the official personnel will have a controlling power. But tribal people should be associated in the management and the routine working of the societies.
- (4) Gradually the state control should be withdrawn leaving the management in the hands of the tribal people themselves.
- (5) Principle of conducting their activities in kind should be accepted.
- (6) Produce of the cultivator should be, as far as possible, marketed through societies on agency basis.
- (7) The marketing of the forest produce should be entrusted to marketing societies specially established with a Central Marketing Society to help them market their produce.

#### *Type of Cooperatives*

The soundness of the recommendation of the Karve Committee with regard to the suitability of the multi-purpose society is borne out by the opinion of other competent field workers also.

The multi-purpose co-operative can take care of some of the most important activities of the tribal people. The Second Five-Year Plan rightly lays down that the "Tribal Co-operatives should, as far as possible, be multi-purpose in character, providing for credit, supply of consumer goods and marketing at the same time".<sup>10</sup> The functions of the tribal co-operative societies may be detailed as below:—

1. To take forest coupes on contract on behalf of the tribal people.
2. To collect forest produce from the tribals.
3. To arrange for the processing of the minor forest produce.
4. To supply improved seeds, manures, fertilizers and implements to the tribal cultivators.
5. To check soil erosion by bunding and terracing, and to arrange for consolidation of holdings.
6. To dig open wells for drinking water, and to construct small dams for irrigation purposes.
7. To supply raw materials and improved tools for cottage industries.
8. To arrange for the collection and marketing of the village produce in the suitable markets on agency basis.
9. To supply basic village requirements such as salt, tobacco, oil, *gur*, etc., at reasonable prices through the consumer's wing.
10. To educate the tribals through children's and adult schools.
11. To look after the sanitation and health of the village and to maintain a medicine-chest containing essential medicines.
12. To arrange folk dance and folk music parties of the tribals and develop their healthy traditions.
13. To help eradicate social evils like *dahei-dapa* and other wasteful and wrong practices leading to tribal feuds.

14. To educate the tribals in the principles of co-operation, honesty and peaceful living.

Besides the functions detailed above they can add new functions as and when required.

### *Position of Multipurpose Tribal 'Societies'*

Between 1951-56 the number of tribal multi-purpose co-operative societies in Madhya Bharat increased from 20 in 1951 to 52 in 1956. The largest number of the societies are concentrated in the Bhil belt which has 42 registered societies. The Saharia belt comes next with 6 societies and Gond Korku belt last with only 4 societies.

But most of these societies are lying defunct today. Some, which are still working, do not have a happy tale to tell.

The table below gives the figures showing the financial position of these societies in 1955-56 :—

TABLE I  
FINANCIAL POSITION OF SOME TRIBAL COOPERATIVES IN THE BHIL BELT (1955-56)

Sl. No.	Society	Number of Members	Loans made to the members during the current year.						Loans repaid by the members at the end of the year.						Reserve Fund Share Capital Laid-up.	Other Funds	Members			Non-members			Societies	Working Capital
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
1	Agricultural Coop. Society, Devigarh (Jhabua)	144	1374.11.6	3615. 9.9	1757.10.3	1400.0.0	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4352. 5.0	3542.12.0	3542.12.0	3542.12.0	3542.12.0	3542.12.0	3542.12.0	
2	Multipurpose Coop. Society, Sajeti (Jhabua)	135	974. 5.3	3424.15.6	1314. 2.0	1455.0.0	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	—	3404.10.6	—	—	—	—	—	
3	Multipurpose Coop. Society, Mehnagar.	156	382. 4.0	171. 0.0	1724. 3.0	1975.0.0	Nil	Nil	Nil	85.0.0	66.0.0	66.0.0	66.0.0	66.0.0	66.0.0	66.0.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
4	Alirajpur Multipurpose Coop., Alirajpur.	189	2150. 0.0	Nil	Nil	1589.0.0	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3681. 0.0	3681. 0.0	3681. 0.0	3681. 0.0	3681. 0.0	3681. 0.0	
5	Multipurpose Coop. Society, Nanpur.	20	Nil	Nil	Nil	400.0.0	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	—	—	—	—	—	—	

(From Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Indore)

The table shows that share capital forms a very small fraction of the total loans made by the societies. Except in one case deposits from members and non-members are nil. The deposits play a very minor role in the finances of the societies. There are no reserve funds in the societies. State subsidy meets the management expenses and Central Banks supply the funds. The members, themselves contribute less than Rs. 10 per head by way of shares. Societies attract no savings and have virtually come to be merely lending societies.

This state of affairs indicates that the tribal multi-purpose societies have not been organized on the right lines. They indicate a malady that has to be diagnosed fully to enable us to suggest proper remedial measures.

The special forms of co-operative for the tribal areas raise some fundamental issues pertaining to the very basic aims and objects and methods of co-operation. It would be relevant to discuss some of these important issues here in brief.

### *The Voluntary Principle*

As suggested by Kale and Prof. Karve the State should take the initiative in organising tribal co-operatives with a good deal of official participation in the management of these societies. It is sometimes feared that this suggestion strikes at the very root of the principle of co-operation

Now, it is nowhere suggested that there should be any forcible or compulsory recruitment of the tribals to the co-operatives. Their freedom in this matter cannot but be respected. The violation, if any, occurs in the matter of management. The illiteracy and general backwardness of the tribal people and lack of what Pigou called the 'telestropic faculty of the mind' makes it imperative that the management be in the hands of the Government. Even in the matter of funds, tribal societies lean heavily on the governmental subsidies and loans. These funds cannot be placed in the hands of the tribals without proper State control and supervision. Therefore, in the initial stages at least there is no possibility of having 'pure' co-operatives

for the tribals. Whatever the theory may say, the practice calls for a type of quasi-co-operative. Gradually, as the tribal is trained in the practice of co-operation, the governmental management can be withdrawn. This will foster in them the spirit of self help in course of time.

### *Liability*

The principle of unlimited liability considered to be the very soul of Raiffeisenism is under heavy fire in India today. It is felt that unlimited liability, instead of being a blessing, proved to be the bane of the movement.<sup>11</sup> The responsibility imposed by this principle kept the well-to-do villagers away from the movement. The movement therefore 'degenerated into a group of borrowers, one insolvent borrower helping the others and being helped by them in return'.<sup>12</sup>

If unlimited liability is a 'liability' to the co-operative movement in India in general, it is much more so in the tribal areas. The nature of subsistence economy and the improvident and ignorant outlook would spell disaster if unlimited liability is enforced. Only limited liability would succeed in securing the relatively well-to-do tribal to the movement. Limited liability, therefore, is the principle suited to the tribal areas. In view of the advisability of doing away with co-operative credit societies and their replacement with multipurpose societies unlimited liability would be a still greater anachronism. The future, naturally, lies with the principle of limited liability.

### *Area of Operation*

Tribal areas have a very low density of population. Apart from the density of population the tribal habitations are generally of a very scattered nature. Particularly in the Bhil belt there are no compact villages. There are hamlets isolated from each other, perched on a rock here and a field there. In such regions the area of operation will have to be geographically larger. It should cover several adjoining villages. The society should be located in a central place which is in some way a place of attraction

to the people. It may be the place of *hat* or common market or the headquarter of the *panchayat*. This should in due course be developed as the hub round which the economic and social life of the tribals shall revolve. In Saharia and Gond-Korku belts there are compact villages and therefore the area of operation, generally, should be confined to a village. In case of the village being very small another adjoining village may be included to form a compact society to give not more than 100 members.

### *Capital*

The share capital in the tribal societies should be nominal, just to distinguish members from non-members. One rupee shares would perhaps meet this requirement.

Thus, in tribal societies share money would not contribute much to the capital of the society. Another source of capital, the deposits from members would also be very limited and unsubstantial. The reliance would ultimately be placed on the funds supplied by the Central Banks and the subsidy from the Government.

The need for a Central Co-operative Bank meeting the requirements of the tribal societies cannot be over-stressed. The tribal societies are mostly inactive and unable to secure the loyalty of their members because they do not have sufficient funds to meet the tribal demands. This is true not only of credit societies but also of weavers' societies and the forest societies. Finance is the rock against which the rickety ship of tribal co-operation founders. The co-operative societies cannot be successful because there is no Central Apex Co-operative Bank in the whole of the State (Madhya Bharat).<sup>13</sup> Karve Committee had, 'therefore, rightly recommended the establishment of a new Central Co-operative Bank for the tribals'.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately this important recommendation of the committee was not implemented. As a result, the tribal co-operatives continue their existence largely on paper alone, playing no notable role in the life of the poverty ridden tribals. It is not uncommon to come across cases where this inadequacy of finances has forced tribals to borrow from the *Sahukar* in order to pay back the co-operative society.

### *State Subsidy*

The Government is giving cash subsidy to help the finances of the tribal societies. The following table gives the amount of subsidy granted to the tribal societies by the Tribal Welfare Department during the years 1951 to 1956.—

TABLE I

No.	Year	Number of societies	Amount of Subsidy granted (In Rupees)
1.	1951-52	20	27,250
2	1952-53	20	31,375
3	1953-54	29	26,876
4	1954-55	48	55,375
5.	1955-56	52	56,240

The Tribal Welfare Department grants subsidy to co-operative multi-purpose societies (including societies engaged in sale and purchase of minor forest produce) at the rate of Rs. 1,500/- per year for the first two years and Rs. 750/- per year for the next three years to meet the management charges.

It is obvious that this subsidy does not add to the capital of the societies. It does lessen the burden of management expenses but the financial position remains largely unaffected.

Thus, in practice, the tribal co-operatives have been left alone to fend for themselves in matters of finance. The tribal is economically too weak to defend himself against economic exploitation. He has co-operatives whose finances he cannot raise. He has co-operatives which no Central Bank helps substantially. He has co-operatives which have subsidised secretaries but no funds. The state of affairs is so deplorable that in 1955-56 the assets of the tribal societies were so meagre that they could not obtain necessary loans though duly provided for under the Plan. The Central Bank looks up to the State Government for financial aid to the tribal societies and the State Government in turn looks up to the Central Government to grant the required funds. Whatever else the State Government may

or may not do, it should at least make good the losses due to bad-debts. That alone would strengthen the position of the societies and they would be able to secure loans from the Banks.

### *Rate of Interest*

It is obvious that the tribal economy demands a very low rate of interest. But the lending rate of the tribal societies in Madhya Bharat is rather high. It varies from area to area, and is regulated with the borrowing rate. There is a usual margin of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent between borrowing and lending rates. The most usual rate of borrowing is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent and the lending rate 9 per cent. In tribal areas the borrowing rate is higher due to scarcity of capital. Even the Central Bank lends to the tribal societies at the rate of 9 per cent. The Society in turn lends to its members at the rate of 12 per cent. From all considerations this rate of interest is nothing but atrocious. If the annual normal credit requirement of a tribal cultivator having a holding of 10 acres and paying Rs. 1/- as land revenue annually be taken as Rs. 300/-, at the close of the year he would be paying Rs. 36/- as interest alone. This would be nearly three times of the land revenue. In a country where land revenue itself is considered unbearable for the vast majority of the cultivators this added burden would be intolerable. If the cultivator does not pay back the loan in time the society imposes upon him a fine of 6 per cent per year—bringing the rate of interest (including the fine) to 18 per cent per year.

This deplorable state of affairs contrasts very unfavourably with the recent feeling in several quarters that "if the farmer is really to be helped, he must be given loans" necessary for his social requirements absolutely free of interest".<sup>15</sup> If this be considered as another extreme, the best solution would be to steer the middle course and have a nominal rate of interest, somewhere between  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 per cent. This is not very utopian either. The Government of India gives loans to the cooperative industrial societies at about this rate.

### *Security*

The insistence upon a suitable security is another instance of the conservatism of the tribal cooperative banks. Every society maintains a *Haisiat* (Assets) Register. All the property, both movable and immovable, belonging to a member is recorded in this register. The society grants loans on the basis of the *haisiat* of the member together with a security from two respectable members. These conditions come in the way of grant of loans to the members. Under such conditions loans for unproductive purposes are especially frowned upon. There is always great delay in securing loans from the society. Agricultural as well as social needs are equally urgent for the tribals, and the usefulness of the loans for these purposes depends upon their timeliness. The various elaborate formalities in the cooperatives cause undue delay, the loans granted are inadequate, the rate of interest not very low and the conditions of repayment very strict. These factors shun the tribal away from the cooperatives and push them into the hands of the *sahukars*. The *sahukar* asks for no security, is quick with his loan and does not insist on any elaborate formalities. Because of this defective working of the cooperative it does not endear itself to the tribals. And, though conscious of the evil methods of the *sahukar* he cannot do without him. Cooperation (as it functions today) does not appear to him to be a substitute of the crooked but useful *sahukar*.

### *Profits* .

In the peculiar settings, physical as well as psychological, of the tribal areas the question of the utilisation of the profits of the societies, when and if earned, assumes a great deal of importance. In this respect there is no uniform practice in force. Mostly the societies are so anaemic that the question of profits generally does not arise at all. Some forest societies and multipurpose societies (particularly in the Saharia belt) have recently made good profits. The question of the utilisation of

profits in these societies has proved to be a thorny one. The tendency of the tribal is to have the substantial part of the profits paid to him in cash on pro-rata basis. The psychology of the poor always tends to disregard the future. His chief interest is in the present. In such societies the general body demands that instead of keeping the profits as reserves to tide over bad years, they should quickly be distributed to enable them to meet their immediate needs. This shortsighted demand is natural and indicates that the spirit of cooperation has not yet seeped down to the minds of the common tribal. A policy of compromise shall have to be evolved to answer this difficult problem. If no reserves are maintained the 'shock absorbing' capacity of the society shall be utterly inadequate in face of adverse conditions in future years. If the part of the profits that is released for distribution as such is paid to the members in cash, it is always likely to be used extravagantly in liquor or in social feasting. That would add very little, if any, to the welfare of the tribal. Depending on the condition of each individual member his share of profits should be kept as his saving in the bank deposit. Or the amount may be utilised for purchasing new land, cattle or agricultural implements for the member. Or it may be used for redeeming his old debts through the society. The object is not to allow the tribal to carry large cash in his pocket. In order to prevent its misuse intensive explaining and propaganda would be essential for such a policy. Otherwise the vested interest shall cash on the ignorance of the tribal and turn him against the cooperatives.

### *State and the Tribal Cooperation*

Besides the subsidy granted to the tribal multipurpose societies the Madhya Bharat State gives certain concessions to the tribal forest societies. They have a policy of giving contracts of forest coupes to the tribal cooperative societies at concessional rates. Since the tribal cooperatives were not properly run the Department envisaged the sponsoring of these societies by recognized public institutions.

Only those cooperative societies that worked under the supervision and guidance of such recognized sponsoring institutions were to be granted the concessional contracts.

### *Causes of Failures*

It is apparent that despite good intention of the State, the cooperative movement has not made a successful headway in the tribal areas. Certain physical targets have been achieved, so far as the number of societies is concerned. But in their quality, and their capacity to provide succour to the impoverished and exploited tribal, the success has been far from satisfactory. Even the most generous supporter of the cooperative movement would not claim that it has done anything more than merely touching the periphery of the vital economic and social problems of the tribals. This failure is all the more lamentable and disquieting because for the tribal people, cooperative method is the only hope of salvation. In private enterprise and a policy of *laissez faire* lies their doom. These are nothing but highroads of their social and economic disintegration in the face of the impact of the non-tribal people of the plains. The social and the economic injustice perpetrated against the tribal people can be resisted through organised unity of the people concerned. Cooperation is by far the best method to provide such a plank. Cooperation, thus, is not only necessary but indispensable for the development and growth of the tribal people. Its failure, therefore, concerns the whole future of these peoples.

What are the causes of this failure of the cooperative movement in the areas where it is so indispensable? Some of the more important causes of failures are the following:

*Form of Cooperatives*—Perhaps the first and the foremost cause of failure is the adoption of unsuitable form of cooperatives in the tribal areas. Despite the recommendations of experts like Kale and Karve the 'voluntary and self-help' type of society continues to be pressed for in these areas. In the absence of the spirit of self-help there was no other force to keep the society active and alive.

✓ The quasi-cooperative with a good deal of governmental participation would have broken the inertia and indolence of the tribals.

*Type of Society*—Second cause has been the persistence with the credit aspect of the movement. Important vital aspects like marketing, sale of consumer goods, better farming, acquisition of land for the landless, securing taccavi loans for wells and other agricultural purposes were neglected.

*Finance*—Third cause has been the lack of finance. In the absence of a suitable Apex Bank with liberal finances, societies did not have sufficient funds to enable them to help the tribals in liquidating his old debts. Nor were they in a position to provide sufficient credit to the tribal for productive and unproductive purposes to help him tide over the lean years. Due to lack of sufficient finances the societies started imposing fines at the rate of 6 per cent per year over and above the normal interest of 12 per cent on the loans over-due. This did not inspire confidence in the tribal mind.

*Conservatism of the Cooperative Societies*—The conservatism of the cooperative societies in their insistence on security, terms of payment and the limit of short term credit were again a strong reason acting against their popularity and success.

*Lack of Trained Personnel*—In the tribal areas where the physical conditions are not made for an easy life it is difficult to secure trained personnel to man the tribal societies. The educated non-tribals that do exist in the tribal areas are mainly from the trading communities who have a vested interest running counter to the interests of the cooperatives. The other class consists of the petty government officials like Patwaris and Patels who have long traditions of oppression and exploitation of the backward tribals. The selfless and the idealistic educated class is a rarity in the tribal areas.

*Lack of Honesty and Integrity of the Workers*—Another very important cause has been the general lack of honesty and integrity in the public workers running the tribal

cooperatives. In several forest cooperatives the tribal societies were granted coupes on concessional rates. In some places public workers and government servants took advantage of the ignorance of the tribal people and cheated the society to the tune of several thousands of rupees. Many such cases are still pending in the Courts.<sup>16</sup>

*The Indifference of the Government*—Despite attractive and generous pronouncement of the governmental policy to help the cooperative movement, the government mainly plays a role of indifferent bystander. At every level of the administration the interest is confined to the physical statistics of the number of societies and the amounts of subsidy. There is no effort to look into the real activities of the societies. Nor is there any endeavour to help these societies serve the ends they are meant for. Even in matters of subsidy and other aid bureaucratic delays offset whatever little could be achieved with the limited resources. The temperament and the training of the government servant is altogether alien to the nature of work he is called upon to do.

*Backwardness of the Tribal*—And last, but not the least is the overwhelming fact of the backwardness and ignorance of the tribal himself. Until he learns the usefulness of cooperation on an organised and extended basis, and becomes his own sentinel all sorts of foreign elements shall continue to hinder the growth of the cooperative movement.

## CHAPTER XII

### FAMINE AND FAMINE RELIEF

#### FAMINES IN CENTRAL INDIA

Famine in India is mostly associated with drought. Various geographical factors have combined to make India vulnerable to famines. This has been so since times immemorial. The economic history of India is replete with harrowing accounts of widespread famines.

Records of famines are scarce in Central India. This region was cut up into many princely States bothering precious little about the welfare of their teeming subjects. By way of reliable record they have left very little for the posterity. The only important source of information and intelligence are the gazetteers compiled by the British officers working in the Central India Agency. It is to this source that the country is indebted for most of the information. A special mention may be made in this connection of Captain C. E. Luard who has contributed not a little to the history and traditions of these parts through his gazetteers, broughers and monographs.

From the point of view of the frequency of famines in Central India, it can roughly be divided into two sections: The Malwa Plateau and the Hilly Regions.<sup>1</sup> The Malwa plateau is generally free from famines and scarcities. This fact has been brought out clearly in the local *Malwi* proverb :

*“Malava dharti gahan gambhir,  
pag pag roti mag mag neer”.*

The land of Malwa is deep and rich. At every step there is food and on every path a spring.

The relative freedom that Malwa enjoys from the periodic visitations of famines and scarcities is due to the nature of the black cotton soil. This soil possesses extraordinary powers of retaining moisture.

The second section comprises of the Vindhyan and the Satpura hills spread over all the three natural divisions

of the State. The longest area under this section falls in the Hill division of the south. But the Plateau and the Low-land divisions have their own quota of hilly and mountainous regions which add to the second section.

As stated earlier, the hilly regions of the State are the homes of the tribal people. The scarcity and famine zones of the State have common borders with the three tribal belts. Just as the people of the plateau and the plains are free from the visitations of famine, the people of the hills have to live in the constant fear of a lurking famine. Another significant fact that requires to be stressed about these scarcity zones is that they are generally one-crop zones. The Kharif is the only hope of their survival. They have, therefore, to live from one cloud to another praying fervently for copious rain in time.

From the reliable records that are in existence it appears that there was a severe famine in Central India in 1344.<sup>1</sup> It did not spare even the prosperous and the fertile Malwa Plateau. Again in 1595 and 1630 there were famines in the whole of the Central India. The hilly and the tribal regions of the north had a severe famine in 1785. In 1803-04 Central India was again in the grips of a widespread famine.<sup>1</sup> The years 1833-34, 1869, 1896-97 and 1899-1900 were again years of famine.

The story of the severe famine in the hilly regions of the north has been described graphically by an Englishman, Mr. Malet, in his interesting diary.<sup>1</sup> Malet was travelling from Bombay to join the Sindhia's camp at Agra in May 1785. A famine was then raging in the lowland region for two years due to the failure of crops and accentuated by war and rapine. Describing his journey through these affected areas, Malet writes, "Vast quantities of human bones and skulls lay scattered over the country and the wretched remains of the inhabitants reduced to a stage of stupid in-activity, and perching themselves on the roofless ruins of their inhabitations seem rather lost in the contemplation of their misery than inclined to remedy it by labour or exertion". .

But by far the most disastrous famine in Central India, of which there are dependable records, was the Great

Famine of 1899-1900 known popularly as the "Chappan ka sal" (V.S. 1956). This great famine affected the western part of the Central India Agency (comprising largely the present territories of the Madhya Bharat) including the Malwa that had not known such a calamity in its entire history. The famine affected 47,000 square miles or 60 per cent of the total area of the Agency.<sup>5</sup> The famine left a long trail of destruction behind. Even today while travelling through the countryside one comes across ruins of villages and hamlets as dismal relics of the terrible catastrophe. Of the mortality there are no reliable statistics, but in Holkar State alone there were 3,658 registered deaths.<sup>6</sup> There must have been many more which did not find their way into the official registers. The mortality of cattle was also very large, amounting to 17,324 in Holkar State.<sup>7</sup>

In tribal folklore and folksong, *Chappan Ka Sal*, is remembered as a terrible happening, and is always accompanied with unprintable abuses. Below is an English rendering of a Bhili song still sung by the Bhils and Bhilalas of the Sailana tehsil in the scheduled area of the Madhya Bharat :—

Ruin seize thee ! wretched drought  
 Thou hast brought us woe throughout !  
 The stars had tallied,  
 The match was valid,  
 Look ! The bridegroom's coronet bright  
 Hath faded and dropt out of sight !  
 The Bride's little hands with *mehdi* red,  
 And yellow feet, *haldi* overspread,  
 Have come to nought  
 And we had bought  
 Provisions in plenty all a waste !  
 Thou hast left a bitter taste ! \*

\*The author is indebted to Prof. D. M. Borgaonkar, Professor Emeritus of English, Government Arts and Commerce College, Indore, for the English rendering.

The wounds of the *chappanya* famine had hardly healed when there was again a recurrence of famines in the tribal areas of the south in 1907-08 and 1911-1912. These two famines had, as a matter of fact, their roots in the 1899-1900 famine which had disastrous effects upon the resources of the tenantry, and the tenantry had hardly recovered its balance during the more or less normal years when it was struck by these fresh famines. Since these, there had been no major and widespread famine in the State except the severe famine of 1952-53 that affected the scheduled areas of the State.

### *Susceptibility of the Tribal Areas of the Madhya Bharat to Famine*

It is evident from the long history of famines and scarcities in Central India that it is the tribal areas of the State where they are most frequent. In the plateau and the plain sections famine is an exceptional occurrence. But the slightest abnormality in the climate is sufficient to touch off a sizeable crisis in the economy of the tribal areas. This is nothing peculiar to Madhya Bharat. All over India the Scheduled Tribes suffer from the same susceptibility. Even when the famine is general and widespread it affects the tribal areas most. This was the case during the 1899-1900 famine in the Central India. The 1901 census report dealing with this aspect of the problem observed, "The loss of population is greatest in the Western States, i.e., in the elevated tract lying along the Aravali, Satpura and the Vindhya ranges". The same phenomenon was observed in the Holkar State in the famine of 1911-12. The Committee appointed to report on the famine administration found that the "famine and scarcities affect the tribal people more". The same thing was observed in the tribal areas of the north, inhabited by the Saharias. The Census Report of 1901 had this to say about this zone, "There was a severe famine in 1899-1900. The net loss of population during the decade was 13.2 per cent. It occurred mainly in the elevated country".

Basically, the reason for this special susceptibility is to be found in the peculiar physical settings of these areas. These areas, as has already been discussed at length, lie in the Brown Belt of rainfall. The important characteristic of this belt is scanty rains with frequent seasonal fluctuations at regular intervals. Consequently this belt is exposed to special hazards which is a constant source of trouble to the people as well as the Government.<sup>9</sup> The areas have laterite and lateritic soils. These soils are thin and gravelly and deficient in the essential elements of plant growth. The regions being rocky and dry there are no sources of irrigation worth the name. As a result of these climatic and topographical features these areas can grow only the Kharif crop provided the rain is sufficient and regular. This one-crop economy practised under conditions of acute shortage of good arable land and a rapidly expanding population, leads to small and the economic units of cultivation. Even during normal years these units are not in a position to yield the tribal family its minimum basic requirements for the year. The land yields hardly any surplus which the tribal may turn into cash or store it for future needs. If the Kharif crop fails, he has no means of subsistence for the whole year. There is no second line of defence in the tribal economy except the forests. But better forest administration in the recent years has led to serious restrictions on the tribal's freedom to use the forest produce to keep the kitchen fires burning. Similarly, game laws have denied the tribal people of the rich proteins they could procure with their traditional weapons, the bow and the arrow. Under such condition, the tribal economy is always on the verge of destitution. Bad year inflicts serious hardships and leaves its mark behind by way of poorer health and greater indebtedness. Thus a low level of living is forced upon them which is utterly incapable of offering any resistance to the conditions of scarcity and famine.

#### *Causes of Crop Failures*

Looking back to the history of famines in the various tribal zones of the Madhya Bharat it is patently evident

that most of the famines and scarcities have been due to the vagaries of the monsoons. Too little, or too much, or untimely rain causes a crop failure in these hilly zones where the agriculture is purely rain-fed. Most of the serious crop failures leading to famine and scarcity have been due to failure of the autumn rains.<sup>10</sup> These areas, as has been shown, are mostly one-crop areas, growing mainly the Kharif. For the Kharif crops June, July and August rains are essential. But to bring these crops to maturity the rainfall of September and October is most important. It is on this, the autumn shower, that the harvest entirely depends. The character of the rainfall of these two months determines the successful sowing and germination of the Rabi Crops.<sup>11</sup> If the September and October rains are not deficient the November rains become unnecessary. They may even cause severe damage to the ripening crops. It is specially disastrous if it follows a wet October, both spoiling the Kharif crops and laying the foundations for rust in the wheat and linseed in the succeeding Rabi. December and January rains, known as *mautha* or winter showers, are beneficial to the Rabi and March rains are patently injurious to ripening crops. Thus the crux of the problem is the failure in successive years of monsoon, especially in September and October. This means failure of Kharif crops and short sowing of the Rabi.<sup>12</sup>

The tribal areas being almost purely Kharif tracts the harm done to the Kharif crop leads to severe scarcity and famine. In the double cropped areas, in the event of the failure of the Kharif, the Rabi acts in a compensatory way. But this compensatory process does not function in the tribal areas, where Rabi is too insignificant to make any material contribution to the tribal economy as such. But it may be noted here that the failure of a crop one year does not necessarily lead to severe scarcity or famine. The resulting distress depends on the economic history of the area. Scarcity or famine is always a cumulative effect of the conditions of several past years.

### *Water Famine*

Besides the famine of food-grains and fodder the tribal areas suffer from acute scarcity of drinking water in the years of bad rainfall.

The tribal people generally depend on surface water for their domestic needs. *Nalas* or *jhirs* (shallow pits in the beds of the *nalas*) give them the supplies of drinking water. In the years of drought the *nalas* dry up and the general depression of the ground-water level affects the levels of the *jhirs* considerably. This causes acute scarcity of drinking water for men as well as cattle. In times of water distress it is a common sight to see the men and the cattle using the same stagnant water-hole for drinking purposes. This practice leads to a lot of intestinal and stomach diseases both among the men and the cattle.

### *Ground-water Conditions*

The Geological Survey of India carried out a detailed study of the ground-water conditions of the southern part of the State between December 1952 and April 1953. Besides the southern portion of the Malwa plateau, the survey covered the entire Narmada valley including the Hilly areas of the Jhabua district. Thus, a major part of the Scheduled Area was covered in the study.

The report of the study published in May 1955 dealt with the whole question of the ground-water resources of the southern Madhya Bharat in great detail.

It was found that in the Scheduled Areas a good deal of irrigation is done from open wells. But such wells are very few in the jungle-covered areas. Within the jungle areas villages are few and the wells are fewer still. But within the open and cultivated country there are numerous wells, many of which are used for irrigation.

During the period under study it was found that the "water level throughout the area showed a marked depression as compared to the previous years. The

maximum amount of depression found in a well is about 12 feet"<sup>13</sup>

### *Relation of Geology to Ground-water*

The principal source of ground-water is rain. While a part of it is lost due to evaporation and run-off, a significant part percolates downwards through the soil and enters into the voids and interstices in the bed-rock to found ground water.<sup>14</sup> The percolation factor depends not only upon the total amount of rainfall but the distribution of precipitation, soil and vegetable cover and the configuration of the ground. In the hilly areas of the Scheduled Area the slope is very steep resulting in high percentage of run-off. The rocks in this area are generally non-porous and hard. The saturation zone in such areas are limited to the upper weathered portion which, in these areas, does not extend more than 20 feet from the surface.<sup>15</sup>

The Report admits that in the hilly and jungle areas there is scarcity of drinking water. This scarcity extends to the whole southern section of Nimar as well as Jhabua.<sup>16</sup> But it is held that although the wells in the archaean rocks prevalent in these areas have not sufficient yield for irrigation, they yield enough for drinking purposes. The Report concludes that "in the aboriginal areas there is more scarcity of wells than water".<sup>17</sup>

### *Capacity for Adaptation*

The long suffering tribal people have developed a great ability of adaptation. They know how to exploit the habitat for their existence and well-being. Without this capacity they would not have survived to this day with their rich, colourful and gay culture. This capacity of adaptation is seen at its best during periods of serious stress and strain like a famine. Mazumdar lists a number of roots and herbs known to the aborigines with which they supplement their meagre food. Most of these have special methods of preparation which the women learn from their mothers and grandmothers.<sup>18</sup>

In Madhya Bharat the tribal people depend on the following forest produce for sustenance :—

Name of the Produce.	Scientific Name or other particulars.	How used.
1. Chenia	A grass	Seeds consumed
2. Karsas	Poinciatia elata	Leaves eaten
3. Khursaori	A grass	Seeds eaten
4. Tarwar or Adnli	Cassia auriculata	Green leaves used as vegetable
5. Moka	Schebera swietensis	Leaves eaten
6. Tendu	Diospyrostomentosa	Fruits eaten
7 Ber	Zizyphus jujuba	Fruits eaten raw or boiled
8 Makoi	A wild berry	Fruits eaten

No mention has been made in the above list of the *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) and the mango which are trees of great economic importance for the tribal people at all times. Particularly the *mahua* yields flowers and fruits of great economic importance. Mango is abundant in the Phil belt. In times of distress mango is used as the staple food. In the Saharia belt the dependence in such times is more on the *ber* and *makoi*. There is a proverb prevalent among the Saharias which speaks volumes of the importance of these wild fruits in their economy of distress: --

Lord Indra hath vow'd  
 That not a cloud  
 Shall squeeze a drop  
 From skies on top  
 Of parched and thirsty Earth.  
 But the Berry said,  
 "Be not afraid !  
 I still will live,  
 You may believe,  
 Not one shall die of dearth!"<sup>19</sup>

Besides these, other wild products like roots, tubers and leaves of certain other plants are also used as food material during times of acute distress. These are eaten either boiled or roasted.

### 1952-53 Famine in the Scheduled Areas

In the year 1952-53 there was a famine in the Scheduled Areas of the State. As this is the most recent one in the long history of famines in these areas, its study would give a distinct picture of the causes and consequences of famines. It will also help in understanding the nature of the relief administered.

The 1952-53 Famine in the Scheduled Areas was heralded by drought which had been persisting since 1950. The failure of rain led to the failure of crops, shortage of drinking water and acute scarcity of fodder for the large cattle population of the area which out-numbers the human beings.

The rain was the sole culprit, and it was so in all the four districts—Jhabua, Nimar, Dhar and Ratlam. Rains were deficient in 1950 and 1951, and in 1952 they were still worse causing great distress. Deficient rains for three years in succession affected an area of 5,000 square miles, 2,360 villages and a population of nearly eight lakhs, mostly tribal. Of the villages affected 1,093 suffered total crop failure and 1,267 suffered considerably.

The table below gives the figures of rainfall in the years under study:

TABLE I<sup>20</sup>

District	Tehsil	Decennial average of rainfall	Actual rainfall		
			1950	1951	1952
Jhabua	Jhabua	30.00	40.14	19.42	33.1
	Alirajpur		26.70	27.62	24.55
	Jobat		42.78	22.74	18.14
	Petlawad		38.76	17.24	32.8
Dhar	Kukshi	27.50	27.93	18.25	11.81
	Dhar	38.80	35.34	29.18	24.20

District	Tehsil	Decennial average of rainfall	Actual rainfall		
			1950	1951	1952
<i>Dhar</i>	Manawar	30.20	40.80	21.40	22.45
	Sardarpur	40.00	47.75	21.40	21.80
<i>Nimar</i>	Khargone	25.65	27.85	20.80	10.36
	Barwani	24.14	21.10	16.95	16.37
	Rajpur	24.81	22.73	21.49	14.05
	Bhikangaon	31.50	28.59	28.76	31.56

It is apparent from the above table that in the years 1950, 1951 and 1952 the rains were irregular—sometimes deficient and sometimes much more than what is required for the normal growth of the crops. Mostly they were deficient. They were characterised by improper distribution as well. For instance, in Nimar during the year 1952 there was sufficient rain in June and July at the time of sowing and the germination of the seeds. But in August, when the moisture requirements are large (6 to 7 inches) and crucial for the proper growth of the plants there was only 2.5 inches of rain. In September also 6 to 7 inches of rains are required. But again the rain was only 2.0 inches. Throughout the Scheduled Area the pattern of deficiency and mistiming was the same. The persistent failure of the rains strained the tribal economy to such a point that they had no resistance left to face the disaster. Ordinarily, when the crops are damaged the tribal people depend for their livelihood on the collection and sale of grass, fuelwood and other minor forest produce. But in 1952 the yield of grass was much below the normal and the other produce was also very scanty. Thus there was no alternate means of employment for the tribals. Their purchasing power touched an all time low level leading to widespread starvation.

As a result of deficient rainfall for three years in succession, the subsoil water level dropped very low and the stagnant pools and small mountain streams dried up over a large area. This resulted in acute shortage of drinking

water for cattle as well as men. The distress started getting serious by the late March of 1952 and assumed very serious dimensions. For some time the Government denied all reports of acute scarcity. The influential Congress press continued to headline stories of widespread hunger, and resultant crime in the Scheduled Areas. Public workers visited the areas and confirmed the existence of serious famine. A group of prominent Congress workers who covered nearly 150 miles in their tour of the area visited many hamlets of the Bhils. In one hamlet they witnessed the housewife preparing seven chapatis of Jowar for seven members of the household after a starvation of full three days.<sup>21</sup> Throughout their tour they came across cases of the Bhils and Bhilalas living on butchered livestock and sometimes even on the beef. It was a common sight to see the tribals subsisting on the leaves of the *pipal*, *pala* and the date palm.<sup>22</sup> As a result of the strong public agitation, the Chief Minister of the State made an extensive tour of the stricken areas in the middle of April and confirmed in very guarded terms the existence of acute scarcity in a widespread area. This was further confirmed by the sudden rise in the prices of the food grains. Upto the end of January the Jowar was selling at the rate of Rs. 10 to Rs. 11 per maund. In April it had risen to Rs. 15/- per maund. Similarly maize had risen from Rs. 14/- to Rs. 16/- per maund and gram from Rs. 16/- to Rs. 18/- per maund. The rise in prices was not very alarming. The alarming feature was the purchasing power of the people. Failure of the *kharif* crop had left no purchasing power in their hands —neither in cash nor in kind. Nor were there any avenues of gainful employment in the areas where they could earn a wage and tide over the difficult period. Credit was not easy as no money-lender was willing to lend to an impoverished cultivator who had neither grain in his bins nor a standing crop in the field. There was helplessness and despondency with future bleak and relentless.

After the visit of the Chief Minister, the Scheduled Areas were declared as the famine affected areas and the famine code was put into operation. Relief works were

opened and special ordinances promulgated to stay proceeding of attachment and of sale of tribal property.

There are no statistics, either private or official, dealing with the mortality of the cattle and the men. But unhesitatingly it was conceded that cattle mortality was high. As regards human mortality the Government spokesmen contradicted all such reports, maintaining that there had been not a single death due to starvation. The "Times of India," however, reported at least two starvation deaths.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, the Government did not adopt an objective attitude towards this problem and there are strong reasons to believe that either no effort was made to collect the figures for mortality or they were studiously ignored. Despite the fact that politics clouded the quantitative determination of the harm done to tribal numbers, it is patent that mortality figures could not have been very high. After all, even the most active administrative machinery cannot dispose of large number of dead bodies without the public getting to know of it.

### *Crimes*

As a result of severe shortage of purchasing power, fodder and water there was widespread distress in the whole of the Scheduled Areas. The hardest hit was the Jhabua district.

There was direct impact of these scarcities on the crime rate in the area. There was a steep rise in the civil and criminal offences. Basically the crimes related to property.

The commonest and the most important crime was cattle lifting. Cattle, goats, buffaloes and poultry were lifted, killed and eaten. In Alirajpur sub-division of the district Jhabua there were large number of thefts and robberies committed by the Bhils.

As the summer advanced and the impact of hunger increased the crimes rose steeply. By April, a flood of reports of thefts had started pouring in the police stations of the Scheduled Areas.<sup>24</sup>

From cattle lifting the crime increased to serious dacoities. The well-to-do Bhils were looted by large bands

of the same tribe. At one place, a band of sixty dacoits invaded a settlement of the Bhils and the Bhilalas, and during the course of the loot killed several villagers.<sup>26</sup>

From several places came the reports of suicides by the tribals suffering from acute hunger, but confirmation of these was not available.

### *Mortality*

In modern times it is rare to come across cases of high mortality due to sheer starvation. The indirect mortality due to severe scarcities and famines has always been considered more harmful than the direct one. It is the famine diseases like dysentery, diarrhoea, cholera etc. directly caused by insufficient and unwholesome food or reduced powers of digestion and assimilation as a result of privation that result in higher death rate in the post famine years.<sup>26</sup> But the fact remains that relatively speaking a famine affects the tribal societies much more than it does the others. In the 1899-1900 famine it was observed in the Bombay State that in the Khandesh and the Panchmahals, where the Bhils and other tribes were in large numbers the mortality was the heaviest.<sup>27</sup> In the Nimar and Nemawar areas of Madhya Bharat the same phenomenon was observed in the 1911-12 famine.<sup>28</sup> Earlier, mention was made of the same fact regarding the Saharia belt in the north during the famine of 1899-1900 when 13.2 per cent of the tribal population was lost.

The higher mortality is due to their low economic level. There is no margin in their economy to absorb the shock of successive bad years or complete failure of crops even in a single year. The administration of relief is very difficult due to the difficult nature of the terrain which is mountainous and wooded with very poor means of communications. In the Bhil areas this difficulty is accentuated still further by the peculiar nature of their villages. The Bhil villages or *paras* as they are called, run into miles and miles with detached hamlets dispersed sparsely. The socio-economic attitude of the tribals is

very indifferent to suffering and he rarely thinks of emigration for relief. Last but not the least is the factor of State policy which has been allowing their exploitation at the hands of the plain-men and the alienation of the best of their lands to the non-tribals. Specially in the former princely states, the administration was coldly indifferent towards the relief of the distressed tribals and did not bother to give him any succour in times of famines.

### *Physiological Effects*

It should be useful to discuss here briefly the physiological effects of famines on the tribal people. It is well known that famine exercises a selective influence over the population. Persons at the extremes of life—very young and very old—are affected more than the middle-aged. In sex also the selective nature is evident by the fact that men are affected more than the women.

These characteristics lead to a very singular phenomenon. At the end of a famine we find the population consisting of an unusually small proportion of children and old persons and of a very large proportion of persons in the prime of life, i.e., at the reproductive ages. For some years the growth of population is very rapid. The births exceed deaths more than ever before as the death rate declines below the average and the population now consists of a large number of healthy persons in the prime of their life and a comparatively small proportion of persons who by reason of old age or infirmity have a relatively shorter expectation of life. This gets reflected in the age distribution of the population which undergoes complete change after a great famine.

### *The Economic Consequences*

The deaths and debility caused by famine lower the efficiency of the population. The labour becomes shorter after the years of famine and the efficiency of the existing labour is deeply impaired. The famine means stoppage of cultivation which again means great economic loss to the tribals. At least the crop directly following a bad

year suffers badly owing to untimely and unsatisfactory operations. The high mortality of the cattle creates conditions of acute shortage of draught power and the supply of organic manure obtained from domestic cattle. These lead to still lower yields and greater pauperisation.

As a result of the lowering of the agricultural efficiency of the tribals, they are forced to greater deficits in their family budgets. This deficit is met by the loans raised from the money-lenders, and the grip of the money-lender on the tribal neck goes on tightening with every bad year. The purchase of cattle and the seeds mean more loans resulting in greater exploitation and higher pauperisation. The nature of the land and the unit of cultivation does not promise greater margins in the future to get rid of the indebtedness. This develops in the tribals a sort of indolence and improvident outlook where tomorrow does not figure in at all.

### *Famine Codes*

The systematic efforts for the prevention and relief of famine commenced after 1858, following the transfer of India to the Crown. This period coincided with several great famine such as Orissa Famine (1865), Rajputana Famine (1873), South India (1876) and the India wide famines in 1896 and 1899-1900. In the local famine of 1837 in upper India, the Government of India had adopted the view that its, "main duty was to offer employment to those who could work, but the relief of the helpless and the infirm was the business of the charitable public."<sup>29</sup> The Orissa Famine of 1865, however forced the Government to take a different view. The famine led to the appointment of an enquiry committee presided by Sir John Campbell. On the basis of the recommendations of this committee it was announced for the first time that "the object of the Government was to save every life." The great South India Famine of 1876 led to the appointment of the first great Famine Commission presided over by Sir Richard Strachey. The subsequent machinery of famine relief was based on the recommendations of this Commission.

The principles of famine relief laid down by the Strachey Commission were later adopted by each province in the form of Famine Codes. These codes were tested time and again in the periodic famines that followed, and amended in the light of the new experiences.

But these recommendations for famine relief were more or less of general application. They had not considered the special problems of the tribal people in their characteristic settings and peculiar features. The 1896-97 famine led to the appointment of a Commission under the Chairmanship of Sir James Lyall and to this Commission goes the credit of making special recommendations for relief in the tribal areas. The Macdonell Commission of 1901 emphasized the importance of "moral strategy" and of "putting heart into the people." Macdonell Commission devoted special attention to the problem of the aborigines and formulated detailed policies and plans for them.

### *Principles of Tribal Relief*

The Famine Commission of 1901 made a very pertinent and pregnant observation when it recommended that "relief must be taken to aboriginal people if they are reluctant to come to it".<sup>30</sup> This becomes necessary because the scene of operations, so far as the tribals are concerned, lies in a mountainous and forest area, where the habitations are scattered over long distances. Means of transport and communications are scanty. As a matter of fact even bridle paths are rare. Secondly, the utter ignorance of the tribal makes it still more difficult to bring him to the relief centre.

The Commission had further stressed the need of liberalising the gratuitous relief and the substitution of automatic methods with the personal management.<sup>31</sup> This, the Commission had rightly stressed, was with a view to overcoming the shyness of the tribal folk.

It follows that the tribal people should be employed, as far as possible in their usual avocations. They do not take kindly to a change of work. And this employment should be provided to them as near to their village or

hamlet as possible. This method would certainly be more expensive. But once it is realized that relief work among the tribals cannot be expected to be a commercial venture in the sense of its remunerativeness, this consideration would not stand in way of the provision of local work opportunities. Another very important suggestion of the Commission pertains to the personnel employed to supervise and administer the relief. The officials employed should be such as can be trusted by the tribals.

On the experience of the past famines the Commission recommended the incorporation of the suggestions of the Famine Commission of 1898 in the Famine Codes of all provinces in which aboriginal tribes were found. It laid special emphasis on the importance of the following measures and methods of relief in tribal areas:—

- (a) Provision of complete programmes of suitable works before the famine begins;
- (b) Appointment of officials specially qualified to deal with the tribes, wherever these are numerous;
- (c) Numerous works near the homes of the people; and, as far as possible, congenial work, such as grass-cutting and storage; wood-cutting and cutting of fire-lines; mat making; village and forest roads; village tanks; clearing fields of stones and stumps; manual cultivation of the fields;
- (d) Daily payment in all cases;
- (e) Constant village inspection, and
- (f) Liberal gratuitous relief for all those who are unable to work.<sup>32</sup>

However, there does not appear to have been any assimilation and digestion of the Commission's recommendations for relief in the tribal areas. At least not in the former princely Central India where the tribal people had a considerable numerical strength. In 1911-12 there was a severe famine in the Nimar district of what was then the Indore State. The relief measures adopted in the distressed area were of the general nature applied to non-tribal zones. None of the princely States bothered to draw up their own Famine Codes. Whenever there was any

distress they followed the codes in operation in the neighbouring areas.

### *Famine Code in Madhya Bharat*

It is interesting to note that until 1952, Madhya Bharat had not a Famine Code of its own. It had a large Scheduled Area, very susceptible to scarcities. And also it had long traditions of severe famines in these areas which were still green in the memories of the people. In 1952 when the famine struck at the Scheduled Area the Government was caught napping with nothing to guide them. There was no preparedness on the part of the Government. They had no system of intelligence to anticipate possibilities of crop failure and dangers of famine. And when the famine did arrive there was hesitation to accept it as such. And finally when it was recognised as the famine there was no cut and dried scheme to meet it. Hastily the Government adopted the Madhya Pradesh Scarcity Manual with only one change—the substitution of the word Madhya Bharat for Madhya Pradesh. This manual laid down the principles and the policy of relief administration.

### *Relief Measures*

The relief measures adopted by the Government of Madhya Bharat in the Famine of 1952-53 may now be studied in the light of the Code adopted by the State. The relief rendered falls under the following broad heads:—

1. Direct Relief.
2. Indirect Relief.

### *Direct Relief*

The direct relief related mainly to gratuitous relief and works. The gratuitous relief is generally frowned upon as it does not lead to thrift and self help. It is confined to the incapacitated and the infirm. Such persons were granted cash doles at the following rates :—

- |                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| (a) Every adult man . . . . .   | Rs. 6 per month. |
| (b) Every adult woman . . . . . | Rs. 5 per month. |
| (c) Every child . . . . .       | Rs. 3 per month. |

During 1952-53 the Government allotted Rs. 35,000/- for this purpose. But by the end of June 1953 only Rs. 5,606/- could be spent. That is, not more than 16 per cent of the allotted sum could be used.

### *Works*

Construction work was undertaken by the Government on a large scale. These works consisted of :—

- (a) Construction of new roads.
- (b) Digging of new wells for drinking purposes.
- (c) Minor irrigation works.

The labour was paid here at the rate of Annas 12 per man per day and Annas 10 per woman per day. These works were of a basic nature touching some of the most important deficiencies and shortcomings of tribal economy. Construction of new roads meant the opening up of a good deal of tribal area. This increased the means of transport and facilitated the contact of the tribal hinterland with the rest of the neighbouring areas. It would now be much more easy to carry relief to the tribals and increase the opportunities of better marketing and disposal of his agricultural produce.

In the same way, the lack of irrigation facilities add to the severity of monsoon failure. The money spent on them is a very long term investment.

These works were dovetailed with the Five Year Plan drawn up for the area.

### *Indirect Relief*

Indirect relief refers to measures that help to reduce distress indirectly. They are :—

- (a) Suspension of land revenue,
- (b) Taccavi advances,
- (c) Concessions.

By way of indirect relief the following measures were taken to relieve distress :

- (a) *Taccavi advances*: The Revenue Department distributed nearly Rs. 2,76,606/- to the tribals by way of subsistence and agricultural taccavi. The

Food Production Department also advanced nearly Rs. 44,000/- for wells, pumps and bunding, etc.

- (b) *Other concessions* : Forest—The tribal people are mostly associated with the forest and lean very heavily upon them in times of distress. It becomes necessary to relax the strict principles of forest administration in such times, without that the tribal would hardly be able to survive.

### *Forest Concessions*

The Forest Department took the following measures to provide relief to the distressed population :

- (a) *Cattle-camps* : By the side of the River Narmada, where water and grass was available in abundance, several cattle-camps were started. Cattle were allowed to graze free of charge in these camps.
- (b) Reserved forests were opened for grazing purposes and the grazing fees were reduced.
- (c) The collection of minor produce, like gum, wax, honey, *mahua*, lac was allowed free.
- (d) Basket, *Biri*, brooms and *chatai* manufacturing centres were started at several places. The articles manufactured here were marketed by the Department.
- (e) Head loads of dead fuel, bamboos, *siroli* and *khajur beams* were given as free grant.
- (f) The rates of fuelwood were reduced from Rs. 1-8-0 per cart to As. 6 per cart for the tribals.

### *Non-execution of Civil Decrees*

In order to meet the urgent situation the Madhya Bharat Government issued a special ordinance suspending certain proceedings in the famine effected areas of the State. This was later given the form of an Act and known as the Madhya Bharat Famine (Suspension of Proceedings) Act, 1953. The suspension of proceedings related to the following :—

1. All decrees for money lending to the foreclosure, sale or mortgage in case the debtor is an agriculturist.

2. Withdrawing attachments of growing crops, agricultural produce, livestock and other movable property of a movable nature.
3. All proceedings against agriculturist under the Insolvency Act.
4. All suits for money pending in any court.
5. Suspension of all instalment decrees.

This Act touched the realisation of nearly 30 lakhs of rupees by way of decrees.

### *Suspension of Realisation of Revenue Demand*

The realisation of revenue demand was totally suspended in the 1093 villages that had suffered a total crop failure. In the 1267 villages where the loss was partial only 50 per cent of the revenue demand was realised. Thus nearly current revenue demand totalling Rs. 17 lakhs was not realised. The realisation of the revenue demand amounting to Rs. 9,55,564/- was suspended as also the realisation of the Taccavi loans.

### *Opening of Cheap Shops*

In order to supply grains to the tribal people at cheap rates Government opened a large number of rationed grain shops. The grain mainly was Jowar supplied at the rate of Rs. 12-8 per maund. Persons paying less than twenty-five rupees as land revenue could get the benefit of cheaper Jowar at the rate of eight seers per adult per month.

### *Some Defects in the Measures Adopted*

The Code recommended for the tribal areas does not find a place in the Code adopted during the 1952-53 famine. This resulted in several types of complaints. These may briefly be summarised as below :—

1. Relief works were found utterly inadequate to provide jobs to the large number of tribals seeking them.
2. Relief works were executed on contract basis which resulted in exploitation of the tribal labour and the flow of money into the pockets of rich contractors. It was found that on such contract works if the Government

spent Rs. 1,200/- on a road Rs. 1,100/- went to the contractor in various forms and Rs. 100/- only to the tribals in the form of labour.

3. Payments at the relief works were not timely. This caused great distress to the tribals living away from the site of work.

4. Large part of the funds allotted remained unused due to red-tapism and indifference of the administration.

5. The measures adopted failed to touch the vital scarcity of drinking water. The shortage remained as before.

As recommended by the Report on underground water conditions, mentioned in this chapter earlier, more public wells should be dug in this area for drinking purposes. It is indeed unfortunate that this aspect of the problem continues to be neglected.

### CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that most of the relief provided is of a temporary nature.. It can help to alleviate suffering for the timebeing. The suspension of *Taccavi* realisation, suspension of revenue demand and gratuitous relief are all of a temporary nature. The measures account for more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total relief expenditure. Less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total expenditure is on the items of a permanent nature like roads, *ghats*, tanks and wells.

Looking to the future it is difficult to believe that a succession of bad rains, followed by bad crops will not spell the same disaster as in the years 1952-53. For, basically the economic pattern remains the same. Paucity of water, entire dependence on rains for drinking as well as agriculture purposes continues to be as before. Unfortunately the lessons learnt and the experience gained have not been capitalised for the future prevention of the onslaught of famines.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TRIBAL POLICY IN THE NEW ERA

The tribal people belong to some of the oldest races settled in this country. From the earliest times the tribal people have been coming in contact with other people. References of this contact are scattered in the ancient literature of the country. Sanskrit literature mentions these people in clash with the Aryans. The ancient Tamil literature also describes these contacts and clashes. This contact continued in various degrees through the centuries. Some tribal people got absorbed in the exterior castes of the Hindus, but the wilder tribes maintained their integrity. They remained undisturbed and followed their own systems of social and tribal organisation.

The first real encroachment into the tribal existence can be said to have begun with the British. Before the British there were no definite policies with regard to the tribal people. Broadly the policies of the Government of India *vis a vis* the tribal people may be divided into two well defined periods: (1) The British period, and (2) The Present period.

The occupation of India coincided with the opening up of the country. This brought the British in contact with the tribal people. These initial contacts were marked by clashes. Mal Paharias of the Rajmahal Hills in Bengal during the Governor Generalship of Warren Hastings in 1772 were the first to revolt against the Hindu Zamindars. They were put down by violent military operations by the British. The tribal lands were distributed among the retired and disabled soldiers and thus a ring-force of military minded people was created round the Paharies. The British promulgated the Regulation I of 1796 for the special administration of these areas. This was repeated by the Regulation I of 1827. Then came the Santal insurrection in 1855. This was preceded by revolt of Hos of Singhbhum in 1831 and the Khonds in 1846. The Santal insurrection was a revolt against the exploitation by the

up-country money-lenders, merchants and the Brition who were there to build a railway line. This armed revolt was suppressed by the British by their customary.

The revolts by the Hos, Khonds and the Santals led the East India Company to constitute the Act 37 of 1855. Earlier the Act 24 of 1839 had been enforced for the administration of certain tribal areas of the Madras Presidency. In 1874 the Indian Legislature Assembly passed the Scheduled Districts Act to coordinate the administrative machinery devised for the tribal people in different areas. This brought into use a new term the "Scheduled Tracts." Tribal areas were specified and constituted as "Scheduled Tracts". These tracts in the various parts of the country were administered directly under special rules. But even then the alienation of land, rack-renting, bond service etc. continued unabated.

The Government of India Act of 1919 conferred special powers on the Governor General to specify any tract as backward tract and to frame special rules for their administration. The 1935 Act was also, like the preceding Acts, purely political in concept.

A review of the British policies towards the tribals shows that the various constitutional measures taken by them failed to solve the basic problems of the tribal people. In the words of Guha "Neither has the economic exploitation been checked, as judged from the reports of Messrs Symington (Bombay), Grigson (C.P.) and Elwin (Orissa); nor is there any tangible evidence of increase in the adaptability of the tribes to changing conditions".<sup>1</sup> And he goes on to add, "The steady addition to the number of specially reserved areas with each succeeding constitutional change, if anything, points to the other way".<sup>2</sup> Shrikant rightly says, "In the days of the British administration, the problem was absolutely neglected, and what was emphasized was the preservation of law and order in the tribal areas and not the development of the tribals".<sup>3</sup>

#### PRESENT PERIOD

The present period of the history of tribal policy really begins with the Independence of India in 1947.

The country drew for itself an elaborate constitution, constituting itself into a Sovereign Democratic Republic. The Constitution of India, 1950, confers some fundamental rights on every citizen and makes special provisions for the tribal people. Special mention may be made of the constitutional provisions regarding the creation of ministries of Tribal Welfare in certain states, reservation of seats for the tribal people in the Government services and the Central and the State assemblies.

### *New Policy*

The British were so occupied with the problem of law and order that they did precious little towards the moral and material welfare of the tribal people. The new policy of the post-1947 era, as laid down in the elaborate Constitution of the country, is a positive policy. This new policy, in every sense, marks a revolutionary turning point in the whole outlook.

In the very initial stages of the formulation of the new policy some leading anthropologists of the country had stressed the need of integrated development of the tribal communities. Guha had suggested two basic fundamentals of a sound tribal policy. In his own words, "These are, first of all (i) the preservation of the basic structure of tribal life and authority; and secondly (ii) their participation and gradual integration in the general life of the country without the loss of their individuality".<sup>4</sup> Guha cautioned the policy makers against a policy of isolating the tribal communities from the rest of the civilization as was the case in U.S.A. under the "Special Measures Act. Ideas of white supremacy made the assimilation of the primitive people impossible. But in India the position is different. There is no doctrine of racial arrogance here, and there has been a good deal of the mixing of blood. Guha said, "Besides, complete isolation has never led to progress and advancement, but always to stagnation and death whether we look to lower animals or humanbeings".<sup>5</sup>

India in her Prime Minister, Sri Jawahar Lal Nehru, has found, probably the bitterest opponent of the doctrine

of isolation. In his memorable speech delivered at the opening session of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas Conference held in New Delhi in 1952 the Prime Minister deprecated this approach which treated the tribal people "as museum specimens to be observed and written about".<sup>6</sup> He rejected the other extreme of the approach that wanted their total assimilation in the rest of the society—even forcefully. Suggesting a new balanced approach he said, "We must give them a measure of protection in their areas so that no outsider can take possession of their lands or forests or interfere with them in any way except with their consent and goodwill ..... One must always remember, however, that we do not mean to interfere with their way of life but want to help them live it".<sup>7</sup>

Verrier Elwin has rightly termed this approach as "a gospel of friendliness and equality".<sup>8</sup>

### *Planning for the Tribal Welfare*

The new approach thus laid down in the Constitution and elaborated by the leading anthropologists of the country and championed by the Prime Minister of India forms the basis of new policy for the tribal people which has found expression in the planning in India.

### *First Five Year Plan*

The First Five Year Plan laid down the basic approach of tribal planning as "the provision of social services for the betterment of their lives".<sup>9</sup> It said, "The conditions are now generally such that there has to be positive policy of assisting the tribal people to develop their natural resources and to evolve a productive economic life wherein they will enjoy the fruits of their labour and will not be exploited by more advanced economic forces from outside".<sup>10</sup> Referring to their social and religious life the plan stressed "it is not desirable to bring about changes except at the initiative of the tribal people themselves and with their willing consent. It is accepted that there are many healthy features of tribal life, which should not only be retained but developed. The qualities of their dialects,

and the rich content of their arts and crafts also need to be appreciated and preserved'."<sup>11</sup>

The First Five Year Plan gave priority to the improvements of communications in the tribal areas, construction of wells and the improvements of irrigation facilities, development of their forest economy, agriculture, health and hygiene and education etc.

### *Second Five Year Plan*

The Second Five Year Plan is based on the same approach as laid down in the First Plan. There has only been some elaboration of the earlier approach on the basis of the field experience gained during the First Plan period. For instance there is the admission that "the welfare and development programmes in tribal areas inevitably involve a measure of disturbance in relation to traditional beliefs and practices. In their implementation, therefore, the confidence of the people and, in particular, the understanding and the goodwill of the elders of tribal communities are of the highest importance".<sup>12</sup> And the Plan suggests that the tribal people should be assisted largely through their own institution.<sup>13</sup> This aspect of popular cooperation was not given this importance in the First Plan. Another shift in emphasis relates to the importance attached to the education of the tribal people. Greater attention is paid to the problem of indebtedness in the tribal areas and more stress laid on the launching of the cooperatives of all types.

Independence has brought new awareness of the problems of welfare and a shift in national thinking from agitation to construction. This is more so with regard to the millions of the primitive people who have so far been subjected to most brutal exploitation. The realization has now crystallized that their rehabilitation and welfare is the responsibility of the whole country. And any scheme of their welfare should be of a comprehensive nature "embracing every sphere of life, economic, educative and social".<sup>14</sup>

### *Tribal Policy in Madhya Bharat*

In the Princely period when Central India was broken up into so many states, estates, jagirs and zamindaris, there was no awareness of the existence of the tribal. There was nothing by way of a tribal policy in any of the Central India states. The British had a policy of not interfering with the internal matters of administration of the states unless they happened to be of a political nature. Therefore the various Acts and Regulations that were applied to tribal areas in the British India were not applied to the Indian States. A strong effort was made by the former Holkar State by appointing a Committee to make recommendations as to the steps which the Government should take for ameliorating the conditions of the tribals. But nothing came out of these efforts. The tribal areas of Central India continued to be neglected in the matter of welfare. Their exploitation continued unabated.

With the independence of the country and later the formation of the union of Madhya Bharat, for the first time the tribal problem of the area was brought to light. Madhya Bharat accepted the policy laid down by the Central Government. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, specified the list of the Scheduled Tribes in the State. The Scheduled Areas (Part B States) Order, 1950, laid down the Scheduled Areas of Madhya Bharat. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution a new Ministry of Tribal Welfare was established. A separate Directorate of Tribal Welfare and Harijan Uplift was set up to look after the interests of the tribal people as provided for in the Constitution.

### *Thakkar Bapa Committee*

Madhya Bharat Government in 1950 constituted a committee for "preparing a Five Year Plan for Adiwasī Welfare in Madhya Bharat". Shri Thakkar Bapa was appointed the Chairman of the Committee. Unfortunately Shri Thakkar Bapa could not attend the deliberations of the Committee owing to illness. The Committee submitted its report in 1951.

Although the Committee was not in the nature of an enquiry body, it did make some recommendations regarding legislations and policy matters. The Committee felt that "Government ought to take certain other steps for the development of the Scheduled Tribes". In the view of the Committee some of these steps should relate to the following aspects of the tribal life:

(i) *Drink*—Liquor drinking has been a great cause of the poverty and backwardness of Scheduled Tribes. Therefore the Committee suggested the introduction of gradual prohibition in the tribal areas of the State. It suggested a 10% reduction in the existing liquor shops in the areas, so that within 10 years the scheduled area may be completely dry.

(ii) *Transfer of land from aborigines to non-aborigines*—Due to rise in the prices of agricultural commodities there was an appreciation in the value of land. Land was passing from the tribals to the non-tribals. The Committee suggested a suitable legislation to prevent this alienation on the lines of the States like Bombay, Madras, Orissa and United Provinces.

(iii) *Control of Money-lending*—The Committee suggested the licensing of the money-lenders and the prohibition of charging more than 12 per cent of interest. It further suggested that such licenses be granted by the Commissioner for Tribal Welfare. The interest should be simple and higher rate of interest punishable by law.

(iv) *Debt Relief*—The Committee suggested that the old debts be settled by a suitable debt relief machinery to give relief to the indebted tribals.

(v) *Labour Co-operative Societies*—The committee suggested that the Government should engage tribal labour for irrigation, public works and the Forest Departments through labour cooperatives. It also suggested the need of regulating the wages in the area. It recommended that the tribal multipurpose cooperatives should be given preference in the matter of forest contracts. \*

Other recommendations of the Committee related to the training and the selection of staff for the tribal welfare work.

The Government of Madhya Bharat have taken some important legislative measures to protect the interests of the tribal people. Madhya Bharat Tenancy Act provides for preferential treatment to members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the matter of allotment of land. By another Act the transfer of land from tribal to non-tribal hands was regulated. There is another Act that seeks to license the money-lender, and regulates the rate of interests and the practices of money lending.

### *Future Scope*

It can be said without exaggeration that in the New Constitution of India the tribal people have secured their 'magna charta'. In the last ten years they have at least gained an admission of their special problems and obtained invaluable rights and privileges. These rights were denied to them for scores of centuries from the time they came into clash with other races and cultures. They were never treated as equals. They were ever wronged and oppressed. That era ended with the new Constitution. A positive approach took the field and a protective and ameliorative policy based on respect for the tribal culture has come to be regarded as a *sine qua non* of tribal regeneration.

This change, though revolutionary in form and content, is largely a psychological and constitutional change. The vital aspect of practical application is yet to be implemented. The Five Year Plans provide the instrument which can translate constitutional safeguards and pious platitudes of policy into objective facts. The test of all good intentions lies in the practice. Merely good laws have never protected anybody. A suitable change in the attitude of the non-tribal society and the administrative machinery of the country is also essential for the protection and welfare of the tribal communities.

## CHAPTER XIV

### RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

The tribal communities of Central India present a pattern of economic culture which cannot be fitted in the absolute unilinear classes suggested by earlier economists like Adam Smith, List and Hildebrand. These Tribal communities show a pattern that is a mixture of various elements—from food gleaning to agriculture and from barter to credit. Nor does it seem reasonable to dub these tribes as primitive, as was the wont with some anthropologists who not only insisted upon a separate label for each primitive community but also stressed the need of a separate theory of primitive economics.<sup>1</sup> This view has also now undergone modification and it is felt that the difference between tribal and non-tribal societies is largely one of degree rather than of kind.<sup>2</sup>

Taking the Bhils, Bhilalas, Saharias, Gonds and the Korkus, constituting the tribes of Madhya Bharat, they are all settled agriculturists with the same economic impulses and motives as we find in the agricultural communities of the rural India.<sup>3</sup> They are all engaged in the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of wealth as other rural communities of India are.

The whole study of the economy of these tribes is a study of rural economics. The only feature that differentiates their economy is the fact of their appalling poverty and their exploitation by the more advanced non-tribal communities. In all these tribes agriculture forms the principal source of livelihood of the overwhelming section of the population. As a matter of fact their dependence on agriculture is even more pronounced than in the country as a whole. The secondary source of livelihood in all these tribes, in varying degrees, is the forest. Diversification of sources of livelihood is severely restricted in scope because of the presence of the Scheduled Castes and Caste Hindus

in the tribal areas who have come to have deep rooted vested interest in the hereditary occupations. Any change of occupational division encroaches on the economic interests of the traditional castes, and is hotly resisted.

Another special feature of these tribes that differentiates them from other rural communities is their social set up, their customs and traditions, their ideas of right and wrong, their whole set of values. The tribal man cannot be treated and studied as an 'economic man' alone. As Malinowski says, ".....economics as an enquiry into wealth and welfare, as means of exchange and production, may find it useful in the future not to consider economic man completely detached from other pursuits and considerations, but to base its principles and arguments on the study of man as he really is, moving in the complex, many-dimensional medium of cultural interests".<sup>4</sup> Marshall stresses the same thing when he says, "Economics is a study of men as they live and move and think in the ordinary business of life".<sup>5</sup> The economy of the tribal communities should be studied in the context of non-economic motives in order to understand the other forces that motivate their desires. The importance of such integrated study is all the more important in view of the plans that we would like to draw up for their amelioration.

### *Poverty and Population*

The fact that stands out most boldly in the picture of tribal economy that we have described in the foregoing pages is the fact of the general poverty of the mass of the tribal population. The economy of the tribes is of the subsistence type and generally the standard of living is below the level of subsistence. There is acute unemployment and under-employment for a good part of the year. This is the common feature in the years of normal rainfall. When rainfall is too little or too much, or not well distributed throughout the year, the tribal population moves to a brink of disaster facing acute scarcity and famine. As tribal economy is characterised by disinvestment there are no savings to fall back upon in lean years. The

scarcity period is tided over by loans from the sahukar and collection of minor forest produce. Scarcity of rainfall some times affects the volume of forest produce. When the agricultural scarcity happens to coincide with forest scarcity the tribal population is destituted even more. Wild fruits, roots and leaves provide sustenance to a large majority of tribal population. Chronic under-nourishment leads to the alarming decline in the health and vitality of the tribe. They become easy prey to diseases like Malaria and Cholera common to tribal areas.

Even in the ordinary course the tribal food is highly deficient in nutrition. *Makka* and *jowar* are the staple food of the tribal people. Pulses are eaten in a very small quantity. Their diet is highly deficient in fats and carbohydrates. Green and leafy vegetables do not form a part of tribal diet except in rains. Vitamins are conspicuous from their absence from the tribal food. The tribal diet is most unbalanced and lacking in all those things that go to make a healthy and vigorous person. In the sense of important nutrients as well as the daily intake of food the tribal communities suffer from chronic hunger.

This hunger can be traced to the tribal soils. Through the food that is grown over them they affect the health of the tribal people. Due to constant erosion and lack of manures and fertilizers the soil is getting poorer. In the words of Josue De Castro, "where there is progressive impoverishment of the soil in a given region, the foods grown in it decline in nutritive value, with consequent deterioration of the local population".<sup>6</sup>

This deterioration does not manifest itself in the reduction of numbers. The effect is qualitative. Mental apathy, lack of ambition, absence of initiative, indolence—the traits we notice in Bhils, Bhilas, Saharias, Korkus and the Gonds throughout the State—are a consequence of this type of hunger.<sup>7</sup>

We are again indebted to the same author for new light on the sexual and demographic consequences of chronic hunger which explains the fact that despite patent

poverty chronic hunger, and ill-balanced and insufficient diet the tribal communities—particularly the Bhils, Bhilalas and the Saharias—show a higher rate of growth of population than even the economically better communities on the Malwa Plateau. Castro distinguishes between the effects of chronic hunger from those of acute starvation. Starvation diminishes libido. People “subjected to persistent mal-nutrition, on the other hand, appear to be sexually stimulated. They show a definite increase in fertility over less badly fed”.<sup>8</sup> He further says, “this intensification of the reproductive capacities in chronically starved people develops through a complex process involving both physiological and psychological factors”.<sup>9</sup> The psychological consequence is the undue importance that comes to be attached to sex as a compensation for “shrunken nutritional appetite”.<sup>10</sup> This increased libido results in higher sex activity as we find in the Bhils and the Bhilalas.

The higher fertility in the main tribal communities may be explained by another physiological aspect of poor nutrition. Castro terms it as the ‘hunger for proteins’. This involves “a deficit in certain important aminoacids which increases the fertility of animals”.<sup>11</sup> Lacking, as the tribal diets do, in protein of animal origin this may be another factor responsible for their higher fertility.

No doubt these dietary factors of higher fertility are not the only factors responsible for the large growth of tribal population. The isolated homesteads among Bhils and to certain extent among the Bhilalas contribute to higher sex activity. Lack of recreation and absence of community life further highlight sex.

Thus the poor standard of living in the tribal communities is associated with the mental apathy of the tribal as well as higher rate of growth of population which further tends to lower the standard of living. This is a vicious circle. Substantial improvement in the standard of living is the only way of breaking it. Another way would be to settle Bhils and Bhilalas in compact villages with ample means of recreational activities and other

cultural diversions. This would gradually diminish the importance of sex and would lead to better chances of tribal education.

As we have seen, the poverty of the tribal people is responsible for large size of their population which threatens to grow larger every year. The increasing pressure of population on land is tending to diminish the already low standards of living. The psychological aspect of poverty is no less disturbing. Mental apathy, indolence and lack of initiative affect the very root of all economic efforts. A low standard of living does not rouse them to greater enterprise. This psychology is a great barrier in tribal rehabilitation. The remedy does not lie in economic changes alone. Cause and effect have a sort of chain reaction. In the long run effect becomes a cause, and both become equally important.

The tribal economy in Central India has therefore got to be tackled from several positions. We can briefly group the lines of action into the following :

- (i) Economic
- (ii) Non-economic

Non-economic factor may further be divided into :

- (a) Social, and
- (b) Administrative.

### *Economic*

Among the various economic problems the chief are : agriculture, forests, handicrafts, marketing and rural credit. The lines on which each of these need to be refashioned have already been discussed earlier. But so far agriculture is concerned it appears that under the present circumstances isolated efforts by the cultivators cannot solve these problems. United effort is essential for success. Some aspects of agriculture like irrigation and contour bunding by their very nature cut across individual interests. They are communal in nature, and can be undertaken only jointly. Cooperation has a very great potential in the field of agriculture. Cooperative (or collective) farming would enable the cultivators to

achieve what they cannot even dream of individually. Amalgamation of small units into a big unit would facilitate soil conservation through contour bunding. It would result in more economic use of the limited resources of the community. It would also mean higher farm investments and would reduce the risk of destitution which a small size cultivator faces individually. Bigger unit of cultivation would result in better crop rotation. Even irrigation may become possible if the resources are pooled together.

It is sometimes argued that tribal people would not be able to come together in cooperatives for joint farming. This is refuted by the experience in the Saharia belt in Madhya Bharat. The experiment is worth recounting.

The Department of Agriculture, Madhya Bharat, founded three colonies of the landless Saharias in the Pargana Kolaras in Shivpuri district. These colonies are :

- (i) Berasia
- (ii) Berikheda, and
- (iii) Paragarh

All the three colonies were founded in 1954 : Berasia with 20 Saharia families and 247 acres of fallow land, Berikheda with 16 Saharia families and 200 acres of land and Paragarh with 25 Saharia families and 315 acres of land. Besides the land to be held jointly initially for 6 years the State Government gave the following loans per family :

(i) Bullocks	...	Rs. 500/-
(ii) Housebuilding	...	Rs. 200/-
(iii) Bullock-cart	...	Rs. 150/-
(iv) Implements	...	Rs. 20/-
(v) Consumption	...	Rs. 250/-
(vi) Seeds	...	Rs. 125/-

Total                    Rs. 1,245/-

Under an enthusiastic retired official these three colonies formed into cooperatives were functioning smoothly. Despite two bad years in succession the

societies were doing very well. It is difficult to measure the economic benefit at this stage. But the social and psychological benefits were obvious even in this short period. As the most downtrodden and oppressed tribe of the State, the common Saharia is a very diffident person with very little self-confidence and very little initiative and humour. But they were changed men in these colonies. Their newly set up villages were full of love and laughter and rustic music. Men were bubbling with enthusiasm. The day the author visited them they were engaged in building a dam across a *nala* by voluntary labour to irrigate their common fields. There were no feuds to break this unity, and they were hopeful of high yields next season.

Thus, psychologically there is nothing in the tribal behaviour that may be considered as opposed to co-operative farming. As a matter of fact besides agriculture other activities like marketing, handicrafts finance, forest etc. should also be brought under cooperative endeavour.

### *Non-Economic Social*

Probably the most important social problem of the tribal life is the problem of liquor. It has its social and ethical repercussions on one hand and economic on the other. We have seen how the temperance policy of the Government has increased the burdens of drinking without making them prohibitive. This policy has led to more illicit distillation. This has again placed heavy economic and ethical burdens on the tribal people.

What is called for is a policy of total prohibition in the tribal areas. Total prohibition in Bombay State has benefited the Bhils of the State considerably. Prohibition has not caused bootlegging. The Bhils have been able to get along with their ceremonies and festivities without the liquor.<sup>12</sup> There is no reason why the same polity should not succeed in the tribal areas of Madhya Bharat as well.

### *Education*

Literacy in the tribal communities is notoriously low, probably not more than one per cent. Ignorance of the tribals in the three R's causes their exploitation at every stage of life. Lack of education keeps them away from the benefits of arts and cultures of other people and keeps them shut in their own wells of ignorance and superstition. Education of the tribal people is as important as water to their land. The best medium of educating them would be their own tribal language if they have one. In a tribe like Saharia which has forgotten its own language, the medium of instruction should be the language they speak now.

Special books should be prepared for different tribes which may educate them in the reading and writing of the language and at the same time impart them instruction in matters like evils of drunkenness, over-spending in marriages and death feasts, taking of dowry etc.

### *Recreation*

Tribes, specially the Bhils and Bhilas, live in scattered hamlets with very little of social life and healthy recreation. If these tribes are settled in compact villages, community radio sets may be provided for their entertainment. Tribal parties of musicians and dancers may also be organized which may visit neighbouring planes on fixed days and provide entertainment at cheap price.

Simple and inexpensive outdoor games like volley-ball and foot-ball may be organized to draw the youth out in healthy recreation.

### *Administration*

Almost all the factors of economic and social life of the tribal people are directly or indirectly influenced by the administrative machinery of the State. Therefore, the quality of the administration and their approach towards the tribal problems would make all the difference

between success and failure of the best possible schemes of tribal welfare. Understanding and love for the tribal culture is a prerequisite of successful administration. Any approach of superiority or over-righteousness will produce only very adverse effects. "It is a dangerous pastime to try to save the primitive soul by alien methods and religion, for, in such attempts, more often, than not, the primitive man himself disappears".<sup>13</sup> All our schemes of tribal welfare have to be set in the tribal customs and cultures without killing them.

Some kind of regional autonomy and decentralized administration appears to be essential to meet the special needs of the tribal areas. Guha has suggested that in order to save the tribal people from political and commercial exploitation and against undue interference by well-intentioned missionaries and social reformers, the tribal areas should be organised into large autonomous areas.<sup>14</sup> He suggested the creation of such an autonomous tribal area in Central India by bringing the various similar tribal areas together into one unit.<sup>15</sup> This would make their administration much easier. Special laws and rules would then be easy to administer.

Another aspect of the administrative problem relates to the tribal people's participation in the schemes of their regeneration. Tribal panchayats need to be reorganised and activitised. The tribal councils also need to be made more broad based and representative in character. They also need more powers in their hands. All experience shows that such councils are powerless to influence the administration in the most vital matters. This is due to lack of coordination between the tribal councils and the various organs of the Government. If the reorganisation of the importance of the role of tribal councils remains merely formal, devoid of all respect for them, they will continue to be sleeping bodies.

Many of the faults of administration in the tribal areas can be attributed to the ignorance and the wrong attitude of the Government officials. It is generally not

realized that all processes of transformation act through acculturation and assimilation. And by their very nature these processes are slow. They do not permit of forceful emasculation of tribal culture or the imposition of new culture from outside. Enlightened persuasion based on respectful understanding of the tribal life and customs is the only way of bringing "the tribal communities to the level of other cultural groups. Our aim is to make the tribal communities economically strong and socially sound and well-knit so that with their own life and culture they may be able to play an important role in the life of the country.

## REFERENCE

### CHAPTER I

1. Malcolm, Sir John, Memoirs of Central India, (1880), Vol. I, page 2.
2. Ibid, op. cit.

The Imperial Gazetteer of Central India, 1908, page 2 defines Malwa as a country "lying between the great Vindhyan barrier, which forms the northern bank of the Narmada valley, and a point just south of Gwalior; its eastern limit is marked by the ridge which runs south to north starting near Bhilsa, while its western limit marches with the Rajputana border."

3. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Central India, 1908, page 2.
4. The new State consisted of 15 Salute States: Alirajpur, Barwani, Dewas (Senior), Dewas (Junior), Dhar, Gwalior, Indore, Jaora, Jhabua, Khilchipur, Narsingarh, Rajgarh, Ratlam, Sajiana and Sitana; 7 Non-Salute States: Jobat, Kathiawara, Kurwai, Mathwad, Mohammadgarh, Pathari and Piploda; and 3 Estates: Jamnia, Rajgarh (Bhumia) and Nimkhera.
5. The States Reorganisation Commission recommended the redrawing of the boundaries of the states in the Indian Union. Accordingly the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956, came into being and led to the formation of the new state of Madhya Pradesh comprising of the whole of Madhya Bharat, Mahakoshal areas of the old Madhya Pradesh, whole of Vindhya Pradesh and Bhopal. This integration and reorganization was brought about on the 1st November, 1956.
6. "This was at all times an area of refuge, the geographical conditions of which enabled communities displaced by invasions to take shelter and carry on their life unmolested by the people of the Gangetic valley. The Minas, the Bhils and other indigenous tribes first took shelter here. In more recent times when the Muslims occupied the Gangetic valley, it is to this inhospitable area that the Rajputs withdrew and carved out new States."
- Panikkar, K. M., Geographical Factors in Indian History, Bombay, 1955, page 29.
7. Wadia, D. N., The Vedic Age, London, pp. 97-98.
8. Venkatachar, C. S., Census of India, 1931, Central India Agency, Part I—Report, pp. 2-3.
9. Ibid. pp. 216-217.
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11. Cf. Dr. Impey, Records of Bombay Government No. XIV, new series, 1865, P. 5 as quoted by Mackay in the 'Central India'. "No great depth of water can ever be expected in it from the nature of its tributaries, except in the monsoons, neither were they to promise better could it be retained, owing to the great declivity of the bed of the river, which from Jhansi ghat near Jabalpur to the sea falls 1,200 feet in 500 miles."
- The Chambal Project will cost Rs. 71.69 crores. It will produce 2,10,000 kw. of Power and shall irrigate 14,00,000 acres of land when completed.
13. Central India Gazetteer, 1908. p. 102.
14. Aberigh-Mackay, G. R., Central India, 1878, Vol. I, p. ii.

15. Malcolm, Memoirs, Vol. I, pp. 2, 3.
16. Now renamed Vidisha.
17. Malcolm has given a very good account of the Rath region. He says, "From the Vindhya range on the western extremity of Nemaur there extends north a hilly tract separating Malwa from Gujarat, whose general breadth is from fifty to seventy miles. The southern portion of this tract, which lies between Tandah and the Narbudda, constitutes what the Hindus term Rath and contains the several petty states of Jabooh, Ally, Bhabra, Jobat, and the lands of their several dependent chiefs, the greater portion of whose subjects are Bheels." Memoirs of Central India, Vol. I, Page 13.

## CHAPTER II

1. Datta Majumdar, N., The Adivasis, "The Tribal Problem," Delhi, 1955, p. 22, and  
Guha, B. S., The Adivasis, "Indian Aboriginals, And Who They Are," Delhi, 1955, p. 31.
2. These States were: Ratlam, Sailana, Alirajpur, Barwani, Jhabua, Indore, Gwalior, Dhar, Jobat, Kathiwara and Mathwad.
3. In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-paragraph (i) of paragraph 6 of the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of India.
4. Now known as Western Nimar.
5. The order was made by the President of India in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 312 of the Constitution of India.
6. Census of India, 1931, Central India Agency, Report p. 127.
7. Geography Behind History, (London), p. 12.
8. In the following account of the Bhils and the Bhilas the author has drawn heavily on:
  - (i) The Jungle Tribes of Malwa by C. E. Luard
  - (ii) "An Ethnographic account of the Bhils of Central India in the Census of India, 1931, Central India Agency." The latter is an improved and enlarged version of the former edited by C. S. Venkatachar.
9. Russell, R. V., and Hiralal, Rai Bahadur, the Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, (Macmillan, London, 1961), p. 278.
10. Census of India, 1931, Central India Agency, Report, p. 238.
12. Col. Todd scouts the idea of their having come from outside India and calls them *Vanaputras* or Children of the forest. "The uncultivated mushrooms of India, fixed, as the rocks and trees of their mountain wilds to the spot which gave them birth. This entire want of the organs of locomotion, and an unconquerable indolence of character which seems to possess no portion of that hardiness which can brave the dangers of migrations, forbids all idea of their foreign origin and would rather incline us to the mon-bocco theory that they are an improvement of the tribe, with tails", as quoted by Major K. D. Erskine in the Banswara State Gacettcer (1908) p. 228.
12. Census of India, 1931, Central India Agency, Report, p. 239.
13. Russel and Hiralal, Tribes and Castes of the C. P. of India, Vol. II, p. 279.

14. Pusalkar, A. D., History of Culture of the Indian People, Vol. I, The Vedic Age, p. 261.
15. Bose, A. N., Social and Rural Economy of Northern India (Cir. 600 B.C.—200 A.D.), (Calcutta, 1942), Vol. I, p. 447.
16. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Central India (1908), p. 81.
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18. Memoirs of Central India, Vol. I (1880) p. 424.
19. Russell and Hiralal, Vol. II, p. 279.
20. Banswara State Gazetteer.
21. Hyderabad Census Report (1891) p. 218, as quoted by Russell and Hiralal, I, p. 218.
22. Khargone is the headquarter of the District Nimar of M.B.
23. Indore State Gazetteer (1908), p. 222.
24. Forsyth, Captain J., the Highlands of Central India (1919) pp. 11-12.
25. Highlands of Central India p. 12.
26. English rendering by Prof. D. M. Borgaonkar, Head of the Department of English, Holkar College, Indore.
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29. Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces Vol. II, p. 294.
30. The Jungle Tribes of Malwa, Ibid.
31. Fuchs, Rev. Stephen, in the "Census of Central India", 1941, Vol. I, Holkar State, p. 308
32. Memoirs, II, 128, "This class combines with the pride and pretensions of Rajpoots, the cunning and roguery of the Bhils; and appear to be, almost without exception, a debauched and ignorant race, often courageous from constant exposure to danger, but invariably marked by an equal want of honour and shame".
33. Hutton, J. H., Caste in India (1951), p. 21.
34. Acacia Arabica.
35. Hutton, J. H., Caste in India, London, Second Ed. 1951 p. 291.
36. Pusalkar, A. D., Aryan settlements in India, Vedic Age, p. 261, "The exact location of the Sabaras is now known. They can be identified with the Suari of Pliny and the Sabarae of Ptolemy and are probable ancestors of the Savaralu or Sawras of the Vizagapatnam Hills, the Savaris of Gwalior territory and the Savages on the frontier of Orissa."
37. Mazumdar, B. C., The Aborigines of the Highlands of Central India, (Calcutta, 1927) p. 2.
38. Ibid., op. cit.
39. Vindhyaachal is a famous Hindu shrine near Mirzapur in the Uttar Pradesh.
40. Mazumdar, B. C., The Aborigines of the Highlands of Central India, p. 32.
41. Venkatachar, Central India Agency, Migration of Castes and Tribes into Central India, App. II, p. 274.
42. Ibid., p. 274.

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44. Ibid., p. 177.
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46. Russell and Hiralal, Vol. III, p. 550.
47. Ibid., pp. 550-551.
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49. Ibid., pp. 27 and 37.
50. Venkatachar, *Census of India, 1931, Central India Agency*, p. 218.
51. Ibid., p. 171.
52. Crosthwaite, H. R., *Monograph on Korkus*.
53. Russell and Hiralal, op. cit. p. 554.
54. Russell and Hiralal, *Tribes and Castes of the C.P.*, Vol. III, p. 41.
55. Venkatachar, p. 271.
56. Russell and Hiralal, *Ibid.*, p. 42.
57. Hislop. Rev. Stephen, *Papers on the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces* (published after his death by Sir R. Temple in 1886) as quoted by Russell and Hiralal Vol. III, pp. 42-43. Also compare the explanation of the term given by General Cunningham in the ninth Volume of the Archaeological Survey of India. Cunningham has derived the word Gond from Gauda, the classical term for part of United provinces and Bengal. Since Gonds lived in the Gauda, they were called Gonds. This derivation is regarded highly speculative and improbable, and has now been jettisoned altogether.
58. Russell and Hiralal, Vol. III, p. 43.
59. "The language, an infallible test of culture shows that the Gonds belong to the same family of mankind as the Tamil speaking Dravidians of South India". Forsyth op. cit. p. 18.
60. Russell and Hiralal, op. cit. p. 45.
61. Ibid p. 47.  
"Then they took to the hills with their tribes and turned their hands against their spoiler, till the name of Gond and Bhil became synonymous with that of a hill robber". Forsyth, op. cit. p. 11.

### CHAPTER III

1. Malcolm termed this census as the 'abstract of the Bheel Population of the Vindhya mountains from Kant Kote east to Mandoo west'. This covered 112 Bhil *Paras*, the total population of the area being 8,965. The only importance of this census lies in the details of the agricultural wealth of the tribe. Malcolm, op. cit. ii, p. 322
2. *Census of India, 1911, Central India Agency*, p. 26.
3. Ibid., op. cit.
4. *Census of Central India, 1931, Report*, p. 195.
5. *Census of Central India, 1941, Holkar State*, Vol. I, p. 159.
6. *Census of Central India, 1941, Gwalior*, Vol. XX, p. 808.
7. Ibid., op. cit.

8. Census of India, 1951, Vol. XV, Madhya Bharat and Bhopal, Part I—A Report, p. 6.
9. Census of India, 1911, Central India Agency, Report and Tables, p. 11
10. Op. cit., p. 13.
11. Census of India, 1931, Central India Agency, Part I, Report, p. 25.
12. Ibid., p. 27.
13. Ibid., op. cit.
14. Doubleday, T., The true Law of Populations (1943) p. 57.
15. Majumdar, D. N., The Matrix of Indian Culture, (1947) p. 94.
16. Ibid., op. cit. Italics mine.
17. Gopalaswamy, R. A., Census of India, 1951, Part I—A, Report, p. 7.
18. Census of India, 1951, Vol. XV, Madhya Bharat and Bhopal Part I—A, Report, p. 8.
19. Even Venkatachar had lamented that "there is a fatal absence of vital statistics in this area". Census of India, 1931, Central India, p. 16.
20. (1) *Casual*: It refers to movement between villages—generally adjacent. This class of migration is a result of the custom of obtaining wife from other villages. Females predominate in this class.
- (2) *Temporary*: Caused by pilgrimages, fairs and temporary employment on works. It may also be caused by stress of famine. Generally men preponderate in this class.
- (3) *Periodic*: Due to the seasonal migration of agricultural labour.
- (4) *Semi-permanent*: This is caused by men living in one place and their families in other. The men return periodically to their families.
- (5) *Permanent*: Caused by overcrowding or attraction to other districts.
21. 1951 Census.
22. Gopalaswamy, R. A., Census of India, 1951, Vol. I., Part I—A, Report, pp. 63-64.
23. Census of India, 1931, Central India Agency.
24. 1931 Census Report of the Central India Agency, p. 103.

#### CHAPTER IV

1. Central India Agency (1908), p. 82.
2. Erskine, K. D., A Gazetteer of the Banswara State (1908) pp. 229-230
3. Ibid., pp. 229-230.
4. Ibid.
5. Discussing this subject Forsyth observes, "The system of cultivation thus adopted by the wild tribes, which seems to be a natural consequence of their want of agricultural stock, necessitates a more or less nomadic life". Forsyth, Captain J., The Highlands of Central India, p. 128.
6. Ibid., p. 128.
7. Johnstone, J.W.D., Census of India, 1901, Vol. XXI, Part I Report, Gwalior p. 138.
8. Luard, C. E., Census of India, 1921, Vol. XVIII, Central India Agency, Report and Tables, pp. 75-76.

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11. As defined in the 1951 Census.
12. Madhya Bharat Zamindari Abolition Act, Act No. 13 of 1951 (Samvat 2008).
13. Madhya Bharat Abolition of Jagirs Act, Act No. 28 of 1951 (Samvat 2008).

#### CHAPTER V

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3. Ibid., op. cit., p. 19
4. Preliminary Working Plan Report of the Forests of Kathiwada Range of Dhar Division, June 1951, p. 14.
5. "Economic and Industrial Survey" Gwalior, (1932), p. 119.
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7. Ibid., op. cit.
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11. Ibid., op. cit.
12. Cooperative Administration in Central India, Vol. I, p. 73
13. Jacks, G. V., and Whyte, R. O., The Rape of the Earth, (Faber & Faber) London, p. 19.
14. Ibid., op. cit.
15. Ibid., op. cit. p. 26.
16. Wad., op. cit.
17. Ibid., op. cit.
18. Census of India, 1951, Vol. I, Part I. A—Report, p. 11.
19. Ibid., op. cit.
20. Ibid., op. cit.
21. See the Report of the work done by the Agriculture Department (From 1.4.52 to 31.3.53) in scheduled area of the Southern Division.
22. Census of India, 1951, Vol. XV, Madhya Bharat Part I-B, Subsidiary Tables, p. 45.
23. "In former days opium was the chief irrigated crop which to many tenants was a source of substantial income. In fact irrigation was done, if for anything, for opium. This brought into existence a number of tanks, wells, and other sources of water supply". Final Report of the Revenue Settlement of Holkar State (1929) p. 81.

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29. Whither Agriculture in India, (Agra, 1945), p. 68
30. Ibid., op. cit.
31. Ibid., op. cit. p. 69
32. Ibid., op. cit. p. 70
33. First Five Year Plan
34. Desai, M.B., The Rural Economy of Gujarat, (Bombay, 1948) p. 110
35. Ibid., op. cit.
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38. op. cit., p. 125
39. Number of persons in Agricultural livelihood classes excluding cultivating labourers and their dependents according to 1951 census.
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#### CHAPTER VI

1. Forde, C.D., Food, Habitat and Economy.
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6. (i) The Madhya Bharat Forest Act, 1950.
- (ii) The Madhya Bharat Fisheries Act, 1950.
- (iii) The Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act, 1952.
7. Annual Administration Report of the Forest Department, Dhar Division, 1953-54.
8. Ibid.
9. "The bulk of the forest produce is collected through contractors who tend to exploit the tribesmen" The First Five Year Plan (1962), p. 293.
10. Aiyappan, A., Report on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras (1948) pp. 41-42
11. Ibid.
12. Grigson, W.V., The Aboriginal Problem in the Balaghat District (1941) pp. 42 and 102.

18. Bahadur, R. L., Dey, A. C., and Ramaswamy, S., "The role of minor forest products for the betterment of tribal and backward people". The Indian Forester, Vol. 81 No. 11, November 1955.
14. Naik, D.J., Forest Labourers Cooperative Societies, (1956).
15. op. cit. p. 293.
16. Second Five Year Plan (Delhi 1956) p. 592.
17. Ibid, op. cit.

### CHAPTER VII

1. The Report of the Minimum Wages Committee (Madhya Bharat), 1954, considered that of the total village families surveyed 20.5 per cent belonged to the tribals. Other backward classes formed only 11.5 per cent of the families surveyed. p. 7.
2. Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour, Vol. VI, Central India (1955) p. 55.
3. "While in the State as a whole casual workers predominated, in zone IV (hilly tract of Jhabua) the casual worker was conspicuous by his absence". Ibid., op. cit.  
This conclusion seems to be erroneous as only one village was surveyed for the Enquiry.
4. Report of the Minimum Wages Committee (Agriculture), Government of Madhya Bharat, 1954. p. 16.
5. op. cit., p. 22.
6. Tribal areas are notorious for the problem of drink. Liquor is a great weakness of the tribal people, particularly the Bhils and the Bhilalas. Liquor has a magico-religious, ceremonial, social and recreational importance in these tribal communities. Drink is indispensable at every tribal function and ceremony. Drunkenness among the tribals leads to violent feuds resulting in murders and lasting enmity between the clans. Drink is so deeply entrenched in the tribal thinking and custom that if it is not available in a legal way illicit distillation is resorted to. Detection of illicit distillation leads to high bribes to the petty excise officers, and if prosecuted it ends in heavy fines and sentences. And once a bread-winner goes behind the bar his family is irretrievably destituted.  
As a result of the temperance policy of the State there has been a considerable rise in the price of liquor. Asha 15 U.P. went up from Rs. 8/- per bottle to Rs. 8/10/- per bottle. Even plain spirit 25 U.P. went up from Rs. 2/8/- to as high as Rs. 6/- per bottle. Plain spirit 60 U.P. went up from Rs. 1/8/- per bottle to as high as Rs. 3/5/- per bottle.  
This rise in prices, without a *pari passu* change in the tribal customs led to a rise in the illicit distillation in the tribal areas. Liquor distilled from *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) costs very little—requires very simple equipment which any villager can make and does not require much skill. A bottle of liquor distilled illicitly does not cost more than an anna. Wherever even the plainest licensed liquor is sold at Rs. 1/4 to Rs. 1/8 per bottle (in Jhabua district). As a next step the State Government imposed heavy restrictions on the possession and sale of *mahua* in these areas. It only increased the list of tribal offences. One more thing to bribe for; one more source of tribal persecution.  
In 1951-52 Excise yielded a revenue of Rs. 5, 42, 410 in the district of Jhabua. This amounted to a per capita incidence of Rs. 1.41.

From the point of view of tribal economy next to land tax the most important tax is the Excise tax. Revenue from this source is very close to the income from land revenue.

Madhya Bharat along with Bihar and West Bengal pursues a policy of temperance. It spends Rs. 5,000 (1952-53) annually for temperance propaganda. It has adopted a policy of realising maximum of income from minimum of consumption. With this objective the State has taken the following measures:

- (i) Stepping up of prices
- (ii) Reducing the number of shops, and

(iii) Prohibition of Sale to person below a certain age.

Besides aforesaid, in the industrial towns of Gwalior, Indore, Ujjain, Ratlam liquor shops are kept closed on pay days and festivals.

As a result of this policy the number of liquor shops in 1952-53 stood at 1,886 as compared to 1935 in the year 1951-52. The total consumption of country liquor fell down from 4,99,065.59 L.P. gallons in 1951-52 to 3,69,688 L.P. gallons in 1952-53. The average per capita consumption also showed a decline from 0.06 L.P. gallons in 1951-52 to 0.05 L.P. gallons in 1952-53. The per capita incidence of revenue in the State fell from Rs. 1/12/4 in 1951-52 to Rs. 1/7/11 in 1952-53.

## CHAPTER VIII

1. Drum.
2. "Generally a caste or a group of allied castes considered some of the callings as its hereditary occupations, to abandon which in pursuit of another, though it might be more lucrative, was thought not to be right". Ghurye, B.S., Caste and Race in India, (1932), p. 15.

## CHAPTER IX

1. All-India Rural Credit Survey, Vol. II, General Report, (Bombay), 1954, p. 100.
2. op. cit. p. 101
3. Ibid., op. cit.
4. Ibid., op. cit.
5. op. cit. p. 102
6. Report of the Mandi Reorganisation Committee, Madhya Bharat, (1950), p. 5
7. op. cit. pp 21-22
8. op. cit. pp 5-6
9. Ibid., op. cit.
10. Ibid., op. cit.
11. Ibid., op. cit.
12. Ibid. op. cit.
13. op. cit. p. 25

## CHAPTER X

1. All India Rural Credit Survey, Vol. I, The Survey Report, Part I, (Bombay, 1956) pp 266-269.
2. op. cit., p 264

3. op. cit., p 818
4. All India Rural Credit Survey, Vol. II. General Report, (Bombay 1954) p. 194.
5. The State in India supplies only 3.8 per cent of the total rural credit. Ibid p. 167
6. op. cit., p. 205
7. Ibid. op. cit.
8. Ibid. op. cit.
9. The name of the Bhil is Abla and he is a resident of village Salarpada in the tehsil Ranapur of the district Jhabua in Madhya Bharat. The sahukar was Chaturbhuj Maheshwari of Ranapur.
10. Rural Credit Survey, Technical Report, p. 582.
11. All India Rural Credit Survey, Vol. I, Survey Report, Part I (1956) pp 62-63
12. Ibid., op. cit.
13. Ibid., op. cit.
14. All India Rural Credit Survey Vol. I, The Survey Report, Part I (1956) pp 72.
15. Ibid., op. cit.
16. The Report of the Committee set up for preparing a Five Year Plan for the Adibasis Welfare in Madhya Bharat (1951) p. 27.

#### CHAPTER XI

1. "The economic life of the tribal people and their customs are specially adapted to successful organisation on cooperative and community lines." Second Five Year Plan, p. 592.
2. Cooperation and the Community, (Reserve Bank of India) Bombay, p. 1
3. Report on Cooperative Societies and Banks in Gwalior, 1937, p. 37.
4. Ibid., op. cit.
5. Ibid., op. cit.
6. Report on Cooperative Societies and Banks in Gwalior (1937), p. 131.
7. Report of the Madhya Bharat Cooperative Planning Committee, 1952. p. 93 (Italics mine).
8. Ibid., op. cit.
9. Ibid., p. 97
10. Second Five Year Plan of India, p. 592.
11. Qureshi, A.I., The Future of the Cooperative Movement in India, p. 129.
12. Ibid., op. cit.
13. Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the year 1952. By L. M. Shrikant, p. 16.
14. Report of the Madhya Bharat Planning Committee, 1952, p. 97
15. Qureshi, A.I., The Future of the Cooperative Movement in India, p. 140.
16. The Second 'Five Year' Plan carries the pertinent caution that "where cooperatives are established special care should be taken to ensure integrity on the part of the officials." p. 592.

## CHAPTER XII

1. Gwalior State Gazetteer (1908) p. 86  
See also Indore State Gazetteer (1931) p. 290.
2. Imperial Gazetteer, Central India, (1908) pp. 60-61.
3. Census of India, 1951, Vol. I, Part I-B (pp. 265-266).
4. In "Selection from the State Papers in the Bombay Secretariate (Maratha Series) Vol. I, p. 327, as quoted by Luard in the Gwalior State Gazetteer, p. 87.
5. Imperial Gazetteer, Central India, pp. 60-61.
6. Indore State Gazetteer, (1931) p. 241
7. Ibid., op. cit.
- \* The author is indebted to Prof. D. M. Borgaonkar, Head of the Department of English, Holkar College, Indore for the English rendering.
8. A Report on the Famine Administration, Indore State, 1911-12 A.D., By Major R. Dube (1913). p. 3.
9. Census of India, 1951, Vol. I, Part I-A—Report, p. 11.
10. Scarcity Manual, Madhya Bharat, (1952).
11. Ibid., op. cit.
12. Ibid., op. cit.
13. Report on the Ground-water conditions of a part of the Southern Madhya Bharat, By K. K. Dutta and A. Acharya, p. 5.
14. Ibid., p. 7
15. Ibid., p. 8
16. Ibid., p. 31
17. Ibid., op. cit.
18. Majumdar, D.N., The Fortunes of Primitive Tribes, (1944) p. 13.
19. English rendering from the original Saharia dialect by courtesy Prof. D. M. Borgaonkar, Head of the Department of English, Holkar College, Indore.
20. Statistics obtained from the office of the Revenue Commissioner, Southern Division, Indore.
21. Daily "Nai Dunia" (Indore) dated 15th April, 1952.
22. Ibid., op. cit.
23. The Times of India (Bombay), April 29, 1952, p. 5 col. 2.
24. Daily "Nai Dunia" (Indore), April 2, 1952.
25. Ibid, April 11, 1952.
26. Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901 p. 59.
27. Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901, p. 52.
28. A report on the Famine Administration, Indore State, 1911-12 A.D., (1918) p. 8.
29. As quoted by the Scarcity Manual of Madhya Bharat (1952).
30. Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901, p. 51.
31. Ibid., p. 52.
32. Ibid., p. 53.

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1. op. cit., p. 39
2. op. cit., p. 39
3. Shrikant, L.M., The Scheduled Tribes of India, Social Welfare in India, (New Delhi, 1955) p. 481.
4. op. cit. p. 35
5. op. cit. p. 39
6. Nehru, Jawahar Lal, "The Adivasis" (Delhi, 1955) p. 7.
7. op. cit., p. 8
8. In the article entitled "Do we want to keep them in a zoo"? published in "The Adivasis", p. 22
9. First Five Year Plan, (Delhi, 1952) p. 636
10. Ibid., op. cit.
11. Ibid., op. cit.
12. Second Five Year Plan (Delhi, 1956), p. 589.
13. Guha, B.S., On Tribal Welfare in India, in the publication Social Welfare in India (Delhi, 1955) p. 494.

## CHAPTER XIV

1. Firth, R., Primitive Economics of New Zealand Maori, p. 2
2. Herskovits calls the primitive societies as non-literate societies. "Economic Anthropology" (New York 1952), p. 488
3. "Bhil economics is not of a primitive character" and again, "Bhil economics are not much different from the general Indian Rural economics". Naik, T.B., The Bhils, (Delhi, 1956), pp. 70-71.
4. Malinowski, Bronislaw., A Scientific theory of culture, (Chapel Hill), Chapter I.
5. Marshall, Alfred., Principles of Economics (London: 1936), p. 14.
6. Geography of Hunger, (London: 1953) p. 44
7. Josue De Castro explains "the submissiveness of the Chinese fatalism of the lower castes in India, of the alarming improvidence of certain population in Latin America", as nutritional in origin. op. cit. p. 65.66
8. Ibid., op. cit. p. 66 <sup>3</sup>
9. op. cit., p. 66
10. op. cit., p. 66
11. As a proof of this cause and effect he cites the sensational experiments of J. R. Sloankar on rats published in the American Journal of Physiology, Nos. 71, 83, 96, 97, 98 and 123 (1925-28).
12. Naik, T.B., The Bhils, p. 339
13. Guha, B.S., The Indian Aborigines and their Administration, p. 41
14. op. cit., p. 42.
15. op. cit., p. 43

**APPENDIX**  
**LIST OF THE VILLAGES STUDIED**

Name of the Tribe.	Village	Tehsil	District
1	2	3	4
BHIL	1. Salarpada 2. Banpura 3. Mahigaon 4. Punra Khedi  5. Kakradara bada 6. Savrapani 7. Rangpura 8. Samdee 9. Devajhiri 10. Mohanpura 11. Dhaminana 12. Chuli 13. Kardawat 14 Pagwai Kala 15. Kadawad badi 16. Kakrodra bada 17. Bagli Mujalda 18. Badlipada  19. Aman Khan 20. Ulbad	Sailana	Ratlam
	21. Chota 22. Garbacun		Alirajpur Jhabua
	23. Savrapara 24. Holgaon 25. Avli		Barwapi Nimar
BHILALA	1. Salarapada 2. Chuli 3. Samoie 4. Devajhiri 5. Mohanpura	Jhabua	Jhabua

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	6. Aman Khan 7. Ublad	Jobat Jhabua
	8. Lakhmani 9 Lakhankot 10. Bardaundia 11. Lavankhot	Alirajpur Jhabua
	12. Savrapani 13. Bhil Kheda 14. Kasravad 15. Avli 16. Silawad	Barwani Nimar
	17. Rajpur	Rajpur Nimar
	18. Mahapura 19. Amlatha 20. Dadgaon 21. Tavlaie	Manawar Dhar
	22. Susari	Kokshi Dhar
SAHARIA	1. Rajgarh 2. Amola	Karera Shivpuri
	3. Karar Kherda 4. Kaffar	Pichhor Shivpuri
	5. Kota 6. Neemdanda	Shivpuri Shivpuri
	7. Heerapurbotaz 8. Kishanpur	Kolares Shivpuri
	9. Madkheda 10. Bhojpur	Pohri Shivpuri
GOND-KORKU	1. Jaktha 2. Chaplasa 3. Sokhedi 4. Dewatpura	Kannod Dewas

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